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JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND.

A HISTORICAL TALE.

BY

THOMAS COLLEY GRATTAN,

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIRESS OF BRUGES," &c.

Nought is there under Heaven's wide hollownesse
That moves more dear compassion of minde,
Than beautie brought t' unworthy wretchednesse,
Through envie's snares, or fortune's freakes unkinde.
I, whether lately through her brightnesse blynde,
Or through alleageance and faste fealtie,
Which I do owe unto all womankynde,
Feele my hart perst with so greate agenie
When such I see, that all for pitty I could dy.
Faerie Queene.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND.

CHAPTER I.

As Philip stood up in the midst of his friends and subjects, to receive in his presence the man whom of all others on earth he most hated, he looked a breathing epitome of the whole spirit of his time and station, a living document of the chivalry and sovereignty of the fifteenth century.—His countenance expressed all the vengeful passions of the age, curbed by the pride of feudal power. His tall figure and air of command looked well, in the sumptuous attire which he wore on this occasion. The various articles of his dress were of the richest velvet, satin, and cloth of gold, and of the brightest tints, though black was his usual colour. A belt, sparkling with diamonds, hung from his shoulder. His surcoat and mantle were trimmed with full fifty English yards of silver-worked ribbon, in knots and rosettes. His embroidered cap, in shape like a casque of war, was surmounted by a panache, the *aigrette* of which was composed of twenty-one heron, and the *cimier* of twenty-four ostrich, plumes; while seventeen peacock-feathers streamed down in the fashion of a lambrequin behind. The massive gold collar, studded with precious stones, from which hung the medal and effigy of the golden fleece that marked its owner chief of the order, was entwined with other chains and rosaries, ornaments with which Philip's person was at all times profusely decorated. He was beyond comparison the most richly attired of all the brilliant group; but all were more or less distinguished by the overabundant costliness of the prevalent taste. Among the courtiers twenty-four were seen in a splendid livery of vermillion silk, loaded with embroidery and stiff with jewels, being gifts

from the duke to those who were chosen for the honour of justing with him on the occasion. The squires and pages of each of these wore brilliant suits, thick covered with flame-coloured embroidery; and in short the whole assembly presented a most magnificent and dazzling display.—All persons stood in breathless expectation, their looks shifting alternately from Philip to the entrance of the pavilion, where Gloucester was every instant expected to appear, and their ears ready to catch the words of resentment and harsh dignity with which their duke was evidently preparing to assail his too rash arrival.

And very soon the Count of St. Pol was seen forcing his way through the crowd of guards and attendants, leading, with no courteous grasp, the prisoner knight, whose still unraised visor concealed his face from the gazing crowd. Every one marvelled that the imperious Humphrey of Gloucester submitted to be thus brought forward without a struggle; but their astonishment was increased tenfold at seeing the object of their scrutiny, as soon as he reached the foot of the elevated platform where Philip stood, throw himself on one knee, and bow down before the duke as any of his own vassals or servitors might have done!—Bedford, with the English lords in his suite, started in surprise and displeasure, while their cheeks glowed at the humiliating act. De Richemont, St. Pol, and the Burgundian and Brabancon nobles could not repress a smile of triumph. Philip's lip curled disdainfully, and he cast a look of proud contempt on the prostrate knight. He seemed for a moment thrown back from the high moral attitude of majesty to which he had been working himself up, and he paused as if he wanted words to address an humbled suppliant, though he had been ready and fluent enough to reproach a fallen but daring foe.

During this momentary pause, the kneeling knight took advantage of the liberty afforded to his hands, and rapidly undid the fastening of his casque, which he raised and took from his head, showing to the astonished throng, the fine features, the wondering look, and the inquiring gaze of Vrank Van Borselen.

"Sir Francon de Borsele!" uttered the bystanders, in a chorus of amaze. Philip alone was silent. On discovering who the suspected knight really was, he started with surprise. Disappointment next thrilled his frame; and it

seemed as if a convulsion passed through it, while, with compressed lips and frowning brows, a short and broken sigh involuntarily escaped him. The next variation of feeling was evident rage, but not of that kind which was expected to have burst on his captive enemy in invective and reproach. It was deadly and silent; his cheek grew pale, and as he clenched the diamond-studded handle of his rapier, he sternly, but with assumed courtesy, spoke to those around him;—

"Princes, my cousins, and good friends, and ye noble dames, my wife and sisters, fair countess and the rest, bear with me awhile, I pray you. Let all seek the castle—the morning sports are over. I will rejoin my noble company ere long, when I have fitly dealt fairly with a bold, base hypocrite—a deep and ungrateful traitor!"

The parties thus addressed silently hastened from the pavilion, Bedford having previously retired, not choosing to remain to witness his brother's humiliation, which he felt to be deserved, and therefore did not attempt to avert. The duke's eyes were piercingly fixed on Vrank, as he spoke the latter words just mentioned; the accused youth had sprung on his feet, and looked at once paralyzed with wonder, and covered with crimson flush of indignation.

"Traitor!" echoed he, in a half choked tone of mingled astonishment and defiance; but the words by which he would have followed up this exclamation stuck in his throat.

"Traitor!" rejoined Philip, advancing to the suspected culprit, with his fist clenched, and his lips quivering. "Ay, most manifest and wicked traitor! Could I have believed even evidence so convincing?—So young!—so criminal! Can I trust my eyes that look on the badge of your infamy?"

And then, as if unable to keep his temper within any bounds, he snatched at the girdle of blue silk, which Vrank had so faithfully worn, and so unconsciously suffered to escape from his bosom, and dashing it on the floor, he trampled it under his feet, exclaiming—

"Thus perish every type of her, the wanton, and of him, her usurping paramour! Thus be them, and their cause and its upholders trodden down! As this patent for infamy is defaced and degraded, so may she who gave,

and he who dared to carry it, be crushed beneath my vengeance!" Then turning to the officers, who remained in close attendance on his person, he added in a steady and deliberate tone, and with a countenance of perfectly recovered calmness. "Let my orders be now well looked to! You, John Vilain, my trusty Fleming—you, who saved my life in the bloody Field of Mons, the first of my pitched battles—you, whom I dubbed knight on that desperate day, be now my guardian on *this*, not less dangerous. I name you captain of my body guard, archers, lancers, and arquebusses all. Stand close by me, for I am beset and betrayed. My warning letter was not for nought; but I little dreamed this bosom nourished serpent was one of those it pointed out. Watch this traitor well, good John; and let the Englishman Qué, and that wily Orleanite, Baltizini, be placed in close arrest with him they call Spalatro. The plot is deep and manifold—but I shall sift it! Let old William Le Begue be summoned to attend me in my closet—if cunning leads to safety, he is my best counselor. To the donjon then with that ingrate?"

Another ireful glance thrown on Vrank accompanied these words, and before he could collect a phrase to oppose this torrent of accusation, the duke had left the pavilion, and he found himself seized still more rudely than before, by some of the coarse guardsmen who were to lead him to his prison. A whole volume of thought passed through the mind of the astonished captive, as he saw the gorgeously dressed figure of the duke pass from the pavilion, and heard the clattering hoofs and the tingling of the rich caparisons, which told that his horse was brought forward to bear him away. Vrank was insensible to the indignities intended for him by the satellites of the despot, while his intense reverie went on.

"Good God!" thought he, "what is this world, and what am I? Do I deserve this? Innocent—honest—faithful to this prince—devoted to his service. To be treated like a felon slave at the very moment that I merited and reckoned on praise, honour, and distinction! Yet," continued he, for his keen sense of justice and his candid consideration for others, even then, was awake—"yet this is not perhaps a" undeserved—it is clear I have brought it on myself. That fatal girdle! Who or what can *she* be—the

Circe that threw around me what I thought would be a periapt against ill, but which seems, like the spell in which she has bound my mind, the bane of well-being—the passport to ruin? The duke is not unjust—he will not punish without guilt—and this gust of rage subsided, I know he will hear me, ere he condemns.”

These reflections had scarcely passed through his brain, when they found their best illustration in the reappearance of Duke Philip in the pavilion. This proud but clear sighted despot had read at once in Vrank's looks, and in his indignant repetition of the word traitor, a complete evidence of innocence. Prompt as he was violent, he was suddenly struck with the remorse which a high mind and a proud station may at all times act upon without fear of misconstruction, and he repented the outrage offered to his faithful and favourite follower in the very moment of its commission. He determined to repair the wrong on the spot—to wipe out the disgrace he had so hastily inflicted—to give at least an opportunity of explanation for what had appeared to him almost incredible, while all his better feelings told him it could not be intentionally base. He therefore quickly dismounted from his horse, ere even he had turned his head toward the castle; and ordering his followers to suspend the arrest he had erewhile commanded, and to remain outside the pavilion, he re-entered it alone, just as John Vilain, the redoubted warrior to whom he had confided the charge of Vrank, was, with the rough authority of Flemish notions, in the very act of preparing a scarf to bind the arms of his prisoner—his horror of treachery and treason telling him to hold no terms of delicacy with a culprit, denounced by his master's own lips. Philip, in his usual steady and decided tone, ordered Vilain and his assistant guardsmen to retire. Obedience was as prompt as the command was peremptory, and in a moment more, the Duke and Vrank Borselen stood together face to face, without any one to interrupt or observe them.

While the astonished youth recovered in that moment all his presence of mind and self-command, and as a rush of innate dignity gave an instant tone of force and elevation to his look and manner, Philip addressed him, with all the ease of despotism unbending in the double consciousness of power and condescension,

"Sir Francon, I have been hasty, and I hope I may add, unjust; for princely wrong may be atoned, but a vassal's treachery cannot. Take this ungloved hand—not to press to your lips in the etiquette of court favour, but to grasp within your own as the pledge of my regret and the gage of my esteem."

Vrank stood still and silent while the duke spoke, and ere the last phrase was finished he had deliberately folded his arms across his breast. Philip started back and drew up his head haughtily, as if doubting the possibility of what he saw.

"What!" exclaimed he, "do my eyes indeed deceive me not? Does any man that lives hesitate to accept the proffered hand of Philip of Burgundy? Does my own servitor, my vassal's son, a pardoned——" traitor, he would have added, in his returning anger, had not Vrank stopped him short.

"For your own sake, Duke Philip, for the sake of honour, truth, and chivalry, do not utter one injurious word, to overflow the full measure of the wrong you have done me, and close the gate against all possible atonement. Your follower, devoted and faithful, I am;—but *pardoned* I am not, and will not be—for to accept forgiveness is to acknowledge guilt. Nor yet mistake me for a proud fool, insensible to the wide difference between us till you did me wrong, thereby reducing yourself to my level, though it could not raise me to your height. Hear me, my sovereign! hear me out—I appeal to your reason and your justice against wrath and rashness. I am innocent of all crime, not merely in commission but in thought. I never did ill to mortal man, much less to you, to whom I have sworn fealty and service, for whom I have shed my blood, well paid for by a glorious meed of confidence and honour. But you have outraged me—degrade me you could not—in the face of this whole court—my friends, my fellow soldiers, princes, lords and ladies, natives, and of foreign lands, to none of whom, I may say without a boast, was my untarnished name unknown. And what is the offered salve for the deep wound thus given so wantonly? Your hand, in privacy—as if insult and injury may be borne in the world's full blazon, and their reparation doled out by stealth! that is not fitting for either of us, duke. No honour can be dealt me, if innocent, by the secret pressure of

the hand that was erewhile raised in menace to my beard, while it would be sullied by my grasp if I am indeed a fair mark for its clenched violence, and for your but half-revoked suspicions! No, my noble prince," continued Vrank, rising in tone and emotion from the evident effect produced by his words on Philip, "no! wash out the stain of your reproaches by the broad stream of a public and ample retraction; or if I am still accused of aught unworthy knighthood and manliness, let me prove my honour in those yet open lists, with the best and boldest champion of your court."

Philip was doubly affected as this speech was uttered. He involuntarily admired, and inwardly acquitted, the brave youth, whose true dignity of mind threw that of rank into the shade; yet he winced painfully under the dishonour, which he felt done to his station by every word, look and sentiment of his young lecturer. He could have overcome either feeling separately; but together they were too much even for his experienced haughtiness. He was completely at fault. Pride, power, and duplicity were all put for the time in abeyance; and Philip stood for awhile, if not actually abashed and humbled, at least in temporary confusion. His character never reached that pitch of true magnanimity, which would have prompted its possessor to throw his arms round the young knight's neck, and find honour instead of degradation in the act. Philip, on the contrary, drew back his lately outstretched hand; and not knowing exactly how to reply to what he had listened to, he took refuge in the ready resource for those who are at a loss for an answer—he proposed a question.

"Tell me, Sir Francon, without guile or sophistry, how came you by that girdle, the renewed sight of which transported me the readier beyond myself, inasmuch as my rage at seeing you bear the badge of treason was proportioned to the value which I placed on your fealty?"

Vrank, without noticing the compliment, met this inquiry by a plain and brief recital of his adventure in the Zeven-volden, and minute descriptions of every actor in the scene. Philip listened with acute interest, having during Vrank's progress carelessly flung himself into his lately occupied chair of state. When Vrank concluded, the duke, having quite recovered his self-possession, said, in a

tone rendered impressive by its sternness and by the penetrating look which accompanied it:—

"Sir Francon, you have by chance picked up the clew of as deep a mystery as ever was entangled in forest—your hunting-party was no mean one, for its chief persons were Bishop Zweder of Utrecht, Humphrey of Gloucester, and Jacqueline of Holland."

At the mention of this last name Vrank felt a sudden glow rush through him; his heart swelled, and his brain reeled in the drunkenness of ambitious joy. Such was the electric effect of a thousand condensed associations, all warm, bright, and glorious—a full draught from imagination's boiling fountain. "Jacqueline of Holland! the most noted woman in Europe, the affianced of princes, the equal of queens, the regal beauty, the heroine of her age!—*She* clasped in my arms, she the giver of the gage that cinctured her own lovely form, she whose lips thanked me, whose eyes looked into my heart's cells, and left a ray of love in their dark recess!" Sweet were the thoughts of that first impassioned moment, in which Vrank's soul seemed to burst its thrall and revel in immortal joy. But an icy pang as quickly succeeded to this, when reality laid its cold and heavy hand upon his mind, and he paid the tax imposed by nature on the faculty of prompt good sense, in finding an instant check to the careering flight of fancy.

"Jacqueline of Holland!" thought he again—"the thrice-mated wife, the self-divorced usurper, the firebrand of my country, the accused adulteress, the reputed poisoner, my parent's detestation, my prince's bane! Why, oh! why did I ever meet with her! Why did not the fierce monster gore me to death by her side, in the exquisite illusion that I felt for one as worthy as she is beautiful!"

In the fixedness of his reverie Vrank clasped his hands together, his head sank on his breast, and a faint sickness seemed to spread across his very mind.

"Well, Sir Francon!" exclaimed Duke Philip.

"Well!" echoed Vrank starting, in unconscious repetition of the word.

"Well, canst thou now find pardon for thy prince, if seeing round thy neck the girdle clasped by my own hand as a gift of early affection, on her who *was* my cousin, when in the early days of girlhood she was affianced at Com-

pègne to John of France, I should for a brief space have believed the witnesses of my eyes, and held you for a traitor too, when all mankind turns recreant? I say, Sir Francon, canst thou in knighthood's candour forgive the wrong I did thee?"

The air of dignified remorse which accompanied these words completely overpowered Vrank. He saw in the question and the way in which it was put a host of excuses, and almost of justifications, for all that the Duke had done. No one ever possessed more fully than Vrank Van Borselen that precious quality of candour which enables us to imagine ourselves in the situations of others, makes allowance for their conduct, and judges of them as we would be judged. He for a moment forgot his own emotions in picturing those which must have agitated Philip, in the false impression borne out by evidence so strong; and it was only a conservative instinct of self-dignity, so peculiarly his own, that prevented the ingenuous youth from throwing himself at his proud master's feet, and receiving as a boon the atonement which was his by right. This he did not do; and perhaps Philip did not esteem him the less for standing manfully up, while he gave utterance to sentiments at once generous and modest. But he most assuredly did not love him the more, for failing to display the cringing suppleness which gains favour in the sight of despotism, and on which the duke reckoned when he put on his mock air of proud humility. In fact, Philip "the good" never forgave Vrank Borselen for the unjust indignity he had himself offered him, or for the noble manner in which the injured youth received the apology his temporary good feeling urged him to make. The man who would stand well with a tyrant must always stand below him. To reach his level creates his dislike; to rise above it ensures his hatred. Vrank found out this lesson in the sequel.

But for the present there was a compromise between Philip's new-born enmity, of which he was yet unconscious, and his long regard, which could not all at once become extinct. He held a still further parley with Vrank, the result of which was, on the part of the latter, a solemn disavowal of all connexion with the cause of Jacqueline, an engagement to return to her the fatal pledge of her gratitude, (to give to her feelings no stronger epithet,) and a

promise that he would immediately place on his arm the silver plaquet, with the effigy of the rising sun, the badge that day adopted by St. Pol and some of his associates, to designate their conviction of the noon-day clearness of Philip's cause, against the as manifest usurpation of Jacqueline.

Philip, on his side, avowed his anxiety to render full justice to Vrank's honour and fidelity, in the most public and unhesitating way. He in consequence quitted the pavilion, and walked towards the castle, leaning on the arm of Vrank and conversing with him, with an air the most familiar and confidential.

At sight of this unexpected result of the late scene, the courtiers, guards, and attendants gazed in mute astonishment. The envious, a large majority, writhed with many a mental pang. The generous, a scanty band, glowed with pleasure. All prepared to congratulate the reinstated favourite; and those who, half an hour before, had ransacked their brains for reasons to justify the duke and renounce the disgraced knight, now laboured to discover arguments to uphold the integrity of the one, and defend the tergiversation of the other.



CHAPTER II.

WHILE the numerous inmates of Hesdin Castle prepared for the grand banquet which was to crown this busy day, and while Vrank Van Borselen with difficulty escaped from the assiduities of his so suddenly converted friends and admirers, to make a visit of cordial inquiry to James Lalain, his wounded rival in the tourney, Duke Philip was closely closeted with old William le Begue, the most wily, crafty and crooked statesman, who had up to that epoch figured in the field of politics.

This old man, furrowed by the heavy traces of time, and grey in a long course of guilt, had been from early youth employed in the service of the dukes of Brabant, and had reached the dignity of chief-governor to John, the nominal husband of Jacqueline, at the time of their ill-assorted match. William le Begue was known to be the chief instigator of all the repulsive conduct of this imbecile boy to his high-minded spouse; and it was scarcely a secret that the minister was urged on in his hostility towards her by rewards from Philip, whose object was to force her to the escape which she had effected from her tyrant, who thus became completely the dupe and instrument of the "good duke," in his designs on the new duchy.

When Philip was appointed governor of Holland and Zealand by his cousin John, as before related, the crafty old statesman was attached to his person as the chief of his council; and his sinister and congenial advice was at all times regarded by Philip with more attention than that of all his other ministers put together. The conference which now took place between this well-met pair on the subject of Philip's armament against Jacqueline and her possessions, with all the entangled ramifications of injustice and fraud, would furnish an instructive picture of princely bad faith and statesman-like subserviency. But we cannot check the progress of our story by entering on minute details. Neither would it suit our present purpose, to lay before our readers some of the secret information which Philip confided to his creature. He displayed to him *one* particular instance of perfidy, but all turning to his own advantage, which by no means surprised, though it greatly pleased the old minister; for his bad opinion of mankind prepared him for acts of baseness, and he was delighted at every new proof that his own was borne out by general example.

Arguing on the instance in question, he used his best efforts, and successfully, to work on Philip's suspicion—the most prominent feature of despotism—and he readily persuaded him that nothing but treachery surrounded him where he at present was, or awaited him on the course he was about to pursue. The grand basis of all William le Begue's policy was contempt for mankind and unmitigated selfishness. By disbelief in the honesty of others he sought

to justify his own dishonesty; and he never extended mercy or charity to his fellows, from the conviction that he deserved neither for himself. The aim of his present efforts with Philip, therefore, was to shake his reliance on the fidelity of all his allies, and to convince him that a complicated web of plot and counter-plot was woven, in which it was meant to involve and finally destroy him. He had already worked on him with great effect; no one escaped his sweeping imputations. Vrank Van Borselen was, according to the minister, assuredly guilty with the rest, notwithstanding all his apparent candour; and Philip more readily acceded to this most monstrous of all conclusions, from his growing dislike, and his resolution to force up a justification for the feeling, which had no source but his hasty injustice and the self-humiliation it entailed.

Floris Van Borselen, too, the father, and all his Kabble-jaw adherents, were pronounced unsound and treacherous, by the wide-grasping sentence of William le Begue. But for this last condemnation a clew is readily found, in his determination to obtain the whole government of Jacqueline's doomed dominions for himself, as minister to Philip, acting for John of Brabant, and his consequent resolution to remove every obstacle on fit opportunity, but more particularly, Floris Van Borselen, whose station politically as well as by rank and birth, marked him for the first places of honour and confidence, in the country on whose anticipated conquest Philip was now bent.

The result of the conference was a resolution that the duke should dissemble his suspicion, so as the more surely to catch the conspirators unawares; and that Baltasini and Spalatro, who were "pricked," as on the lists of the Roman tyrants, should be most closely watched, no doubt being admitted by the colleagues in conscription of their being employed by the dowager Dutchess of Orleans, who was a princess of Milan, from whence they avowedly came to execute some design against Philip's life. The English all present at Headin, from Bedford down to Thomas Qué, were also to be strictly guarded against, as implicated in the interest and revenge of Gloucester. The nobles, generally, be their various provinces what they might, did not escape accusal. Vrank Van Borselen was most particularly included, as the undoubted agent either of Jacque-

line's hostile purposes, or of his father's ambitious projects—or both.

These points all settled and agreed on, old William le Begue prepared to take his seat at the banquet, in his accustomed decoration of deceitful smiles; while Philip, the powerful, the brave, and the ambitious, submitted to the degrading yoke of his jealous fears, and took the place of honour in the feasting-hall, the only one who wore a coat of mail under his cloth of gold, or who dared not partake the delicacies of the board, without their being first tasted by the functionary whose duty it was to submit the fidelity of the household to so odious a test.

And now would be the moment to administer large doses of description, were it not our object to satisfy the thirst for knowledge of the human heart, and the numerous vicissitudes of individual adventure, rather than that which drains the fountain of mere antiquarian research. Were the latter alone to be the staple of our industry, we know nothing of the age which now occupies our pen that affords a livelier notion of its grotesque magnificence and preposterous bad taste, than the minute details of such an entertainment as the one given on the day in question, by Philip of Burgundy, to his princely and distinguished company.

Yet it is hard to resist the temptation of entering on so fertile a theme, and the strongest dissuasive, after all, is the fear that some other of the various pens which have been dipped in the same source, but whose productions are unknown to us, have already traced for the readers of historical romance sketches of such a scene as that to which we wish to transport ours. At any rate, the pages of old Oliver de la Marche, that verbose detailer of chivalric record, are easy of access, and are most probably "done into English," for the benefit of those who cannot sift the original seed from the abounding chaff of the old language and the old style. To those pages the curious are referred for pins'-point details of dress and accoutrement, dishes and decorations, and all the wholesale extravagances of feast and tournament, during the sumptuous sway of the House of Burgundy.

In that venerable and valuable tome will be found an ample relation of such a banquet as that now given in the great hall of Hesdin Castle, hung with rich tapestry, and

filled with all the splendid accessories of profuse magnificence. There will be found a list of the princes and princesses, knights, dames and damsels, the chamberlains, esquires, servitors, archers and arquebusiers; the entrées and ornaments of the several tables, among which were a church, a castle, a windmill, a ship, each filled with suitable tenants, "all alive, ho!" and singing to the praise and glory of the good duke and his compeers. Then came the ten or a dozen *entremets*, fantastic representations of living things, stags, swans, lions, wild boars and other monsters, all "subtily and marvellously made;" not forgetting a huge pie, containing twenty-eight choristers, whose chorus was ready at every change of scene, and a naked mannekin and an undraped maiden, who respectively showered rose-water and hypocras on their thirsty admirers, in a fashion, that to modern, and particularly to English taste, savours more of liberality than decency.

But of all such fantastic representations, the mystery of Jason, on his expedition for the conquest of the golden fleece, the savage bulls, the serpents, tigers, dragons and giants destroyed by this prince of sheep-shearers, the sowing of the teeth, and the springing up of the armed men, was *par excellence* the most prodigious; varied by manifold pieces of poetry interspersed through each entertainment, but which we shall not aid in inflicting on posterity.

It was in the midst of such a scene as this, but subsequent to the one now acted, that Duke Philip, and twenty of the most redoubted knights of the celebrated order which the mystery or mummerly just alluded to was meant to honour, conceived the insensate project, and consecrated their never-to-be-fulfilled intention, of a new crusade, by the solemn utterance of those impiously ludicrous *vows* which gave the title to the most renowned repast of those days, when Philip pledged himself, "by God his Creator, the glorious Virgin Mary, the ladies, and the *pheasant*, that he would take the Cross, and expose his body for the defence of the christian faith, against the damnable emprise of the Grand Turk and the Infidels." But on the occasion we have now to deal with, "the good duke" had not reached that pitch of fanatical foolery, and only occupied his mind and put forth his energies for a crusade of spolia-

tion against every principle of manly generosity or moral right.

And even while Philip sat in his state, throwing round broad glances of pride at the assembled chivalry, and lavishing his smiles and phrases of gallantry on the Countess of Salisbury at his side, a new pang of distrust was sent through him, by the discovery of another warning billet, ingeniously concealed in one of the offerings of fruit, served up to tempt his abstemious appetite.

"By Heavens, this is too bad!" cried the tortured despot, as he read the scribbled assurance that a poisoned dagger was destined for his bosom. "What! is my power for nought but to ensure me never-ceasing pain! Am I denied even one hour of relaxation! Are signs, and portents, and prophecies to hover over my head, while blade and shaft are for ever aimed against my heart! Who dares to defile my pleasure and embitter this festive scene by such a foul device as this? Break up the feast! Let those throat-straining minstrels hush their noise? Close the doors to all, and let strict search go round—none may prove exemption from the test! Out on this pageantry—draw close the curtain—I am weary of the scene!" and he flung himself back in his seat, as if in uncontrollable disgust.

Such was, as usual, the first sally of Philip's despotic temper, acting on the impulse of sudden emotion. But this was the vice of his station rather than of his character; for he was not constitutionally passionate, and had he been born a private man instead of an absolute prince, his general suavity had never probably been disfigured by outbursts so foreign to its nature. But it has been seen that he easily recovered from these angry moods; and that considerations of good manners, which so often pass for good feeling, quickly recalled him to a sense of what was due to others and becoming in himself. The whole company now rose, in astonishment and confusion, as the huge doors of the hall were shut in, and the active partizans of despotism prepared to busy themselves in obedience to its commands. Philip stamped his foot and raised his hand, and all the incipient tumult was hushed, as promptly as if some magician with his wand had stilled an elemental storm. Turning to the Countess of Salisbury, and show-

ing her the scroll, which he had crumpled in his angry grasp, Philip smiled his most affable smile, and said, loud enough to be heard by all who sat at his own table—

"Can the loveliest of women forgive the weakest of mortals, if the sight of this ill-omened scrawl transported him beyond himself in one sense, while her charms at the same time did so in another? My first atonement is due *here*. Friends, all accept it; and let my punishment be found in your merciful oblivion of my self-forgetfulness! Resume your seats, that the festivities may go on! Let my impatient mood be forgotten—nor may the bold traitor who has put forth this threat, be gratified by its having caused more than a moment's disturbance."

A gracious smile from the English countess answered the appeal, and the good Dutchess of Burgundy benevolently strove to sooth her truant spouse. The princesses, his sisters, and their lords, all uttered consoling words to the duke; and the buzz of agitation was fast subsiding, under the influence of his echoed expressions, which were passed successively along from one table to another, when St. Pol, who sat near to William Le Begue, and had closely whispered with him and de Richemont during the bustle, rose from his seat and exclaimed—

"Noble Burgundy, my good and trusty cousin, I cannot sit silent, while I see you thus unjustly tried and harassed, by the consequences of your too generous confidence. You have proclaimed free welcome to all comers on these days of open hospitality, and it is clear to all but you, that your bounty is abused. Strangers and wayfarers fill your halls, unknown and unrecognized for what befits the guests of Burgundy. The broad behests of chivalry should be obeyed, no doubt, here in its very place of honour. But these are perilous times, and ripe with risk. I see not why any he that feasts at your board, should wear even negative disguise, as those who come unbadged and unpledged to your cause most surely do. I and some few good friends of mine, Richemont, Saintrailles, Isle d'Adam, Andrew d'Humieres, John Vilein, Francon de Borselen, and other brave associates sprinkled through this noble company, bear boldly the token of the cause to which each good arm that shows the badge is pledged. Methinks that they who still withhold a like display should now in

this distinguished presence tell for why; and I propose that all who may not justify dissent—which is indeed but treason to truth and right—will raise a brimming cup and drink the pledge I offer now to all—Philip the Good, and his good cause, against usurping Jacqueline and those who do her aid or wish her well!”

“Bravely said, St. Pol. I quaff my goblet cordially to the pledge!” cried Richemont, rising, and half emptying a flask of champagne into his drinking glass.

“Health, Burgundy, to thee and thy emprise! I have not yet affixed the placquet to my arm, but hatred to thy foes, home bred or foreign, revolted Hollanders or faithless Englishmen, is deep graven on my heart!”

While he gulped down the sparkling draught, the Duke of Brittany was preparing some short and pithy sentence of adhesion to these sentiments; but Bedford, with an air of peculiar dignity, rose up, and forced him to denote his consent by the silence far more suitable to his oratorical deficiencies.

“Again, brother of Burgundy,” said Bedford, “and in a scene like this, must these intemperate sallies be uttered and replied to? In sooth it does seem as though myself, and my noble lords attendant, with those other knights and ‘squires,’ who came here from our island at the call of chivalric summons, are marked for insult, and that Richemont is its chosen mouth-piece. For myself, so help me Heaven! I heed it not—it passeth by me like a murky cloud of night upon a traveller’s path; but as my country’s representant I cannot brook it, Burgundy, and will not, by St. George! What! is the realm of my fathers then so poor in place, so newly robbed of rank and honour, that every bravo who puts a placquet on his arm may run old England down, and rave and rant in the halls of Hesdin, like some swing-buckler in a brothel? Duke Philip, my worthy brother, my country’s ally, my youthful sovereign’s vassal, I call on thee, firmly and loudly to quash at once this spirit of mutinous outrage, or by my halidome, I quit the castle on the spot, in personal wrath and national enmity! I have spoken.”

These spirited words, to which the regent’s high and solemn air gave tenfold effect, struck forcibly on the haughty lords against whom they were addressed. Bedford talked

of wrath, but not like an angry man; he threatened, but not like a bully; he swore, but not like a blasphemer; he uttered words of unusual force, but they did not seem as if strained up to answer a purpose. It was as though the essence of England's might had rushed through his mind, and given a sacred energy to words, which might be thought to come from the embodied spirit of his country, rather than from a mere mortal champion of her rights.

The confederates, who had erewhile talked so boldly, were struck dumb. The Duke of Brittany alternately played with his beard or twisted his thumbs; and even old William le Begue threw glances of uncertain cunning on Philip and the others, as though doubtful of what part to take, or what sentiments to acknowledge. The various effects on the rest of the assembly may be imagined, and Philip appeared as if mentally weighing all opinions during a pause of some few minutes, and amidst the murmured observations that rose up through the hall. He at length raised his head from the level of soliloquy to that of dictatorial speech, and said aloud,

"My princely guests, brothers and friends, few words must settle this moot point. I am not enviously situated, as Heaven knows, and all will grapt—let all then hold me in some kindness, while I hope to satisfy all. Let me be umpire in this wordy war, which well I could wish turned into silent peace. Richemont, I prithee, cease all sarcasms. 'Tis due to our good brother, the noble regent here, and his princely suite of followers and familiars; and for *his* part, I pray him to let my trusty friends bear what badge to them seems fitting, nor throw dishonour on my rights by disparaging it or them."

"Philip, I meant not that," said Bedford.

"Nay, hear me on," replied Burgundy, "I claim the privilege of host and umpire both—I ask no explanation nor exact excuse."

"Excuse! I believe thee well, good brother, nor do I offer such, in troth. I spoke not to thy dispraise or dishonour, Burgundy, but only claimed the courtesy that England is used to, and *must* have, if I sit by while she or her sons are named. This is no scene of mappery or closet-council, and Richemont must be told the difference if he knows it not.—Bedford, in Philip's cabinet, is a private man—here, in this

open hall, he is England's champion, the scion of her kings, her prop of honour, and as such he will uphold her to the stretch of doom."

"Well, well, it shall be as thou wilt, good Bedford," said Philip, soothingly; for he saw that the regent's blood was most unusually up, and he dreaded that De Richemont and St. Pol might hurry on some premature breach that might mar all his plans, by forcing Bedford to join his brother Humphrey's quarrel, and throw the power of England into the scale against his own with Jacqueline. But this was a needless alarm, for Bedford was too deep a politician, and too much devoted to his country's interests to let him so risk them, notwithstanding the high tone which he felt called on by every sense of policy and pride to assume.

"Fair brother, it shall be as thou wilt—England and all her chivalry shall hold their titles unattainted—"

"By sarcasm or surmise—nought else can dare assail them," said Bedford, in the same uncompromising tone.

"Big words, Bedford!" muttered De Richemont, with a bitter sneer.

"They are the echo of great deeds, Richemont," calmly, but with conscious pride in her husband's fame, replied the Dutchess Anne; and the supper-hall was about to become, like the breakfast-room on a former occasion, the forum of family dispute, had not William le Begue and St. Pol, taking their cue from Philip's expressive glances, restrained De Richemont and implored him to suppress his ire. The better to keep him silent, St. Pol again rose up, and said with assumed good temper, but still in sinister design—

"Verily, good lords, this honours not over much my offered pledge. No glass, save Richemont's, is emptied yet. Burgundy, call a full cup—I claim the privilege of the board—and sure I am, no friend of mine of yours will baulk at the plain form in which my pledge was worded."

"St. Pol," said Bedford, "I must demur against covert insidiousness as well as open taunt. I wish all well to Burgundy, but cannot pledge confusion to my father's son, even in the mask wherewith you meant to disguise it.—Health to thee, Philip, and success in each *good* cause, for there I hold it as mine own!"

The associates saw that Bedford was too wary to be caught in the snare, designed to commit him in the con-

test against Gloucester and Jacqueline; and St. Pol, with sufficient tact to turn from a point where he had met such firm repulses, exclaimed with assumed wonder—

“What more, good Bedford, could we ask of thee? The saints forbid that I should aim to implicate thee in a quarrel with thy own flesh and blood, even though it forms the shrine of such a heart as Gloucester’s! Up goblets to my pledge! Let English *friends* be neutrals if they will; but there are, please heaven, none others here who will not drink success to good Duke Philip, and death to the usurper of his rights.”

A hundred goblets were held up and quickly drained, while as many voices echoed the toast. The knights who wore the silver placquets were conspicuous for zeal, and not the least so was Vrank Borselen, whose fever of mind ever since the scene of the morning, kept him burning with a combination of emotions. But in the midst of these animated groups one strange exception was observed; and attention was quickly drawn upon this individual, whose badge of nobility told that he was entitled to his place at the board, while his bushy beard and brows, and the hood which, in the fashion of the day, he wore in a somewhat inelegant fancy on his head, completely screened him from recognition. While all around him stood up, doing boisterous honour to the toast, he sturdily kept his seat, nor deigned even to fill his goblet from the fresh flask placed beside him by an attendant varlet. Murmurs rose high; and St. Pol, whose keen eye watched all around, soon noticed so remarkable a defaulter to the general test.

“Beshrew me, princes and lords,” cried he, “if we have not one among us, not English neither as I guess, whom the regent’s qualms have converted from our common cause. Fair Sir, may I in knightly courtesy ask if you are a Briton born?”

“Or a French slave on his English master’s sufferance?” added De Richemont, with a spiteful emphasis.

“Neither a Briton nor a Brabanter, St. Pol—nor on a minion’s errand, nor by right of forfeited parole, De Richemont,” exclaimed the questioned knight, in a tone and accent that spoke a volume of Dutch harshness and daring.

“I know that voice, by Heavens!” cried St. Pol.

“You may never forget it, my good count, since the day

it called you so loudly and so vainly before Loignies, in Hainault, to turn and face one who is little used to wait for his enemy's summons."

"Who, then, is this? Let some one answer me?" exclaimed the Duke of Burgundy, with an imperious tone.

"I best can answer the question, noble duke, and my much honoured host; I am called Ludwick of Urk in my native land, and not quite unknown even here as Louis de Monfoort," said the bold Hollander, standing erect, throwing off his hood, and showing his shaggy visage and sturdy person, like an unabashed bear before a company of hunters taken by surprise.

The sensation produced by this avowal was prodigious; and all order of decorum or etiquette was violated, in the efforts of the company to get a good view of the redoubted leader of the rebel Hoeks, the most noted champion of Duke Philip's destined victim, and his deadliest foe. But so much was the high sense of knightly honour encouraged by this powerful sovereign, that not an individual present dreamt of violence or insult to this lone warrior, in the heart of his enemy's stronghold. After the first buzz of astonishment had subsided, Philip addressed the unbidden guest with all the courtesy of chivalry.

"The brave in arms are ever welcome to my halls," said he, "and you, Sir Louis de Monfoort, bear your title to noble treatment in your wide-spread renown; no pledge or promise repugnant to your feelings shall be exacted of you. You are thrice welcome to my board, let the motive of your coming be what it may; and if you have taken this measure, the more prized for the trust it implies in my good faith, for purposes of your own advantage, they are already gained as far I have power to aid them. I know you for a banished man, by decree of my late uncle, Bishop John of Liege. Do you come to ask reversal of your sentence? If so, the boon is granted—I swear it by my knightly faith!"

"Duke Philip, I come not for boon or bounty. I have long scorned that false attain, and I never yet sought favour but with sword in hand. I came here to do you service, not to seek it. I took my place at your board, in right of your wide-spread summons, and perhaps with a curious eye to mark this goodly pageantry. But having

done my task as befits a good knight, and an honest man, I hoped to go as I came, unrecognised and unquestioned. My farther presence, now that I am known, may mar these revelries, so now I take my leave; glad if the easy ingress of one, who, though not your friend, Duke Philip, is still no spy, may teach you caution against others, unpledged by bond of chivalry to respect your princely confidence. I am free to depart in peace and honour? 'Tis so, duke?"

"Ay, by my troth, sir knight, and honoured much for this high bearing, which does not belie your fame. Farewell, Sir Louis! and the more in friendship, as our next meeting may not be of a par with this."

"As you will, noble duke. If you come to visit me at Urk in friendly guise, warm welcome shall be your meed. If you plant your foot on my native soil in hostile mood, I promise you a grasp fitting a freeman's hand on a despoiler's throat. Farewell!"

While the lion of Urk shook his mane, and was retiring from the hall, rolling a look of no tender meaning from his bloodshot eyes, St. Pol, who alone seemed to preserve his wits, at this rude speech, and that only from their being sharpened by personal enmity, called out aloud,

"This must not be endured, good Burgundy! Are not my words confirmed? Is not thy gracious nature abused by rough intruders? Let this amphibious Hollander be told, and through him, his false mistress, that Philip's friends will punish the outrage he scorns. Shall the slave of a branded adulteress—"

"Ha! is it thus thy recreant tongue holds forth?" cried Ludwick Van Monfoort, flinging back his hood once more, and, with the heavy, and somewhat lubberly stride common to his countrymen, stalking towards St. Pol. The latter, in the prompt activity of a Brabanter, sprung from his seat, and, with hand on dagger, waited for whatever assault might come. But Bedford, Le Begue, and even De Richemont (who had a great sense of good breeding when a quarrel was not his own,) interposed between the angry men, while Philip turned all his attention to quiet the alarm of the Countess of Salisbury, and the ladies of his bed and blood. Several of the lords and knights at the lower table, where Van Monfoort had been sitting, stepped forward to stop his solemn march towards St. Pol; but he

dashed through every impediment, until one young man opposed his progress, with a persuasive look, and gentle but firm voice, imploring him to proceed no further.

"Ha! brother of the woodland, is it here we meet? and dost thou, too, swell the ranks of my country's foe? No matter—give me thy gallant hand in mine! That grasp of fellowship has allayed my fury. By the blood of the crox! I am pleased with this rencounter, and glad to hold thee once again in friendly clasp, though grieved the while to see that placquet on thy arm, and know thee for an enemy."

While Van Monfoort, apparently forgetful, and certainly indifferent, to all else around him, cordially shook Vrank Van Borselen's hand, William de Begue took care to direct Duke Philip's attention to the scene, by one of those wily movements of the eye and lips, that without being explicitly either wink or sneer, has all the malice of their mixed expression. Philip answered by a nod and frown, that showed his consciousness and his displeasure at what was passing. In the meantime Van Monfoort asked bluntly who was his new-found friend? and several voices answered for the latter, with his full name and title.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ludwick, with a sad and solemn tone, dropping his own hand low, but without relinquishing that of Vrank, which, on the contrary, he almost crushed in his convulsive squeeze. "Indeed! and art *thou* a son of my worst foe—of him to whom I have sworn eternal hate—of him whose heart's blood must pay his debt of wrong and insult! Be it so! God has marked me for a lone and friendless man, and I must fulfil my doom.—Vrank Van Borselen, I could have loved thee—I did, by Heavens! Thy bravery, thy modesty, thy all-heroic bearing won my rough heart, and ere I knew thy name, I had vowed affection to thy nature. May I yield my death-gasp at my enemy's feet, but I had meant to seek thee through the world, and own thee for my more than son, my chosen friend—my adopted heir! Psha, psha! How's this!" continued the rude warrior, dashing Vrank's hand away, and thrusting, as it were, his own clenched fist into his eye, like as a dyke-digger might strive to dam up the gushing tide. "This is indeed disgrace, worse than the vile insult of yon braggart count—and Ludwick of Urk

must fly to save him from himself—young man, farewell!—and when we meet in the battle-field, forget this weakness, and hold thyself ready for the shower of my wrath, dealt doubly against a Borselen and a Kabblejaw!”

With these words he rushed from the hall, enveloped in his hood, and before the observers could recover themselves, or that heartless raillery and insolent pride could stifle the better feelings which were roused by the scene, Ludwick was in the saddle of his ready steed, which stood, by his orders, waiting in the court, and his heavy hoofs struck fire from the flint-stones of Hesinde pavement, ere the feasting and jollity were recommenced in the castle. By the time the wassailers were again in their places, and before any new incident of excitement could cause any serious turn of thought, the Duke of Burgundy stood up in his place of state, and after a cheerful, and even a witty preface—which he held ready made for the occasion—he took from a page behind him an emblazoned roll of vellum, which for splendid ornament might have rivalled the celebrated illuminated copy of “The Golden Legend;” and he read aloud the following rescript, which he had received that very morning from the Sultan of Babylon, duplicates of which had been sent to almost every potentate and prince in Christendom.

“Baldadock, son of Aire, Constable of Jericho, Provost of the terrestrial Paradise, nephew of the Gods, King of Kings, Prince of Princes, Sultan of Babylon, Persia, Jerusalem, Chaldea, and Barbary, Lord of Africa, and Admiral of Arcadia, Master Archipotel, Guardian of the Isles, Dean of the Abbeys, Commander of the Temples, splitter of shields, piercer of hauberks, breaker of armour, shiverer of spears, overthrower of war-horses, destroyer of castles, flower of chivalry, a wild boar for courage, an eagle for freedom, the fear of his foes, the joy of his friends, the raiser of the discomfited, the standard of Mahomet—the lord of all the world!

“To the Kings of Germany, France, and England, and to all other Kings, Dukes, and Counts, and generally to all on whom our courtesy may condescend, greeting, and love in our grace!

“Whereas, it is very commendable for all who please to renounce error through wisdom—We send to you that you

may hasten to us, to receive your fiefs and inheritance from our hands, by denying your God and the Christian faith, and abandoning the errors in which you and your predecessors have been too long involved. Should you not instantly obey these our commands, our anger will be raised and our sword turned against you, with which we will have your heads as a penalty, without sparing your countries any more than yourselves!

"Given on the vigil of the ambassadiens, the tenth year from our coronation, and the second from our noble victory and destruction of the miserable country of Cyprus!"

Not even the allusion made in this last sentence to an event so unfortunate to the cause of christianity and chivalry, had power to stifle the roars of laughter which the reading of the sultan's letter excited. Duke Philip had calculated well in reckoning it a remedy against the wayward and angry moods of his many guests. It was by management like this he acquired his endearing surname. And never was he more popular in his court than on this night, which he had the address to convert from one of various disagreeable and untoward disputes, into one of broad merriment and general good humour.

CHAPTER III.

THE following day was the sixth of the festivities instituted by Philip in honour of his guests; and being by public notification the last, it was determined on all hands to make it one of super extra enjoyment. The warlike movements that were to commence on the morrow left little chance of a speedy renewal of such scenes, in which many of these then present could never hope to partake; and though few men like to encourage presentiments of ill,

all grasp eagerly at present pleasures, as if each was instinctively forewarned that he was to be fate's first victim.

The earliest business of the morning, after Philip's accustomed exercises, and the despatch of breakfast, was a sporting party (in the heathy lands or wolds around the castle) of rather a mixed nature; for hawking, and coney-shooting with the cross-bow, were to be diversified by bustard-hunting, with some greyhounds of a peculiar breed trained to that long-since exploded species of chase.

Nothing could be more brilliant than the opening burst of the cortége, as the gates of the castle park were thrown wide, and the whole cavalcade appeared to the dazzled eyes of the inhabitants of Hesdin. The long train of huntsmen, falconers, and dogs, the sounding horns, the glittering liveries, the soldier-guards, the goodly company of dames and cavaliers, each lady on her gaily caparisoned palfrey, each knight accoutred for the chase, and falcon on wrist, the sounding of rings and bells, the clatter of hoofs, the mirthful conversation, and the joyous laugh—all helped to hide full many a corrosive care, and combined to raise at once the admiration and the envy of the happily-ignorant and uninitiated lookers-on.

Duke Philip, with all his apparent devotion to the English countess, whose palfrey seemed to make one with his own, so closely did he ride beside her, had nevertheless an anxious, if not a timid glance for almost every one of the suspected individuals of his suite. With a perhaps wise policy, but at any rate with innate self-confidence, he had resolved to have about him, and close to his person, all whose designs he thought he had most reason to fear. He felt, that under the surveillance of his own quick eye they were less likely to have opportunity for working him evil. He reckoned much on the imposing effect of his grandeur; and, like all actively courageous men, he felt more composure in drawing close to danger than in contemplating its distant chance. Besides these motives, or sensations, Duke Philip was too cautious to neglect giving notice of his suspicions to some of those followers whom he *knew* he could trust; for it is a mortifying reflection for virtuous greatness, that even the worst tyrants (and Philip certainly was not one of them) have had in all times at-

tached and devoted followers. In this manner every individual "pricked" by William le Begue, was placed under the peculiar espionage of one of the Duke's chosen confidants. The Milan knight, for instance, was entrusted to Hugo de Bourg, a Burgundian lord, Vrank Van Borselen to John Vilain, the captain of the guard; and Spalatro, the posture-master, to Jacob Wonters, Philip's first armourer by trade, and his trustiest bravo on necessity.

The sports went merrily on. The day was bright and mild, the game plenty, the dogs fleet, the falcons keen. Many partridges were struck down by their talons at the very feet of their fair dames, who had no qualms for the cruel joys of sporting, any more than for the bloody contests of the tourney. Pheasants, too, the sacred birds of chivalry when smoking on the board, were held in no reverence in the open wood, even by the knights who worshipped them at the feast. It was in the short pause occasioned by the capture of one of those beautiful birds, half dead from fright before the merciless hawk transfixed him, that Bedford, Philip, and the other princes, were discussing with the noble ladies in a gallant group, the wondrous diversities offered by the feathered tribe to the admirers of nature. While the ladies chiefly dwelt on the bright-tinted plumage, the graceful forms, the delicious melody which render the winged tenants of air so interesting to sensitive minds, the male part of the company dilated on the strength, activity, and courage of the birds of prey. But few in that rough age had given their minds to the observance of the more philosophical phenomena of character and construction, so marvellous to the deep observer of those buoyant mysteries of creation. The shapes of their bodies, so well adapted for flight, the fitness of their feathered coats for protection in high atmospheres and boisterous winds, the peculiar structure of their bones, made hollow to contain air, and unite lightness with strength, the anatomy of their lungs, limbs, and membranes so framed as to facilitate respiration in their volant passages, the amazing perfection of their sense of sight, their instincts of necessity in providing for their young—these and a thousand other minutiae were little likely to form part of the disquisition. But be it what it might, profound or frivolous, it was suddenly interrupted by the discovery

of a large flock of bustards, which scattering in various directions were immediately pursued by the greyhounds, as they rapidly fled on foot, or flown at by the hawks, while they slowly rose in heavy efforts to escape on the wing.

Nothing could exceed the interest of the promptly followed sport. The hunted birds in some instances baffled and beat the dogs altogether, twisting and turning before them with the sagacity and almost the swiftness of hares, and escaping in the refuge of the furze-bushes and brushwood. Others, when hardly pressed and forced to trust themselves to flight, and even then assailed by the keen efforts of beak and talon, successfully availed themselves of the singular means of defence provided for them by nature; and spirted out from their convex bills whole quarts of water contained in the pouch which lines their throats, a reservoir for subsistence in the arid plains they frequent, or for assault when thus driven to a less congenial element than earth.

The company was quickly dispersed, in the heat and interest of this favourite sport of Duke Philip. He for a time forgot all else—his gallantries, suspicions and precautions. Sticking spurs into his horse, he rode at full speed after a couple of his first-rate greyhounds, on whose fleetness, in rivalry with others, he had laid a heavy wager with St. Pol. The chace was every moment varied by the finding of fresh game, a new bird from the numerous flock starting up almost as fast as the old one was run down or lost, or saving that which was hunted by turning of the attention of the dogs to another object. Philip was well mounted and a skilful horseman, being indeed distinguished at every manly exercise; and now, abandoning himself wholly to the ardour of his sport, he took sudden leave of the female part of the company, and soon outrode many of his companions, who either dropped behind with the ladies, or turned aside from the immediate points of the duke's pursuit, to follow some other which had attracted their attention. A few of the suite, however, contrived to keep close to him; and among them were Vrank Van Borselen, who rode well and boldly, and Spalatro, who was a perfect master of his animal, and not more expert in using the weapons of war, than in training a courser

in the manége, the open wold, or contracted enclosures. John Vilain, whose province it was, as captain of the body guard, to be particularly near the duke's person, kept up as long as he could; but his great weight soon tired his heavy Flemish steed, and he reluctantly saw his master outstripping his staunch safe-guards, and delivered as it were by Heaven into the hands of a suspected enemy. Hugo de Bourg was wholly occupied in watching Baltisini, in another part of the field; and the other men chosen by Philip for his protection were all thus variously occupied in several distant directions, with the exception of Wonters, who, long accustomed to his master's method of hunting, was never thrown out, and now, in all the vicissitudes of the chase, stuck even still closer to his side than either Spalatro or Vrank.

Above an hour had been thus consumed, during the greater part of which, Vrank, though a keen sportsman, had his attention completely turned from dogs and birds to the somewhat singular, though not quite uncommon, appearance of a cowed friar, who, mounted on a fast-going nag, had followed the varieties of the chace, or rather of the duke's movements, in the evident purpose of being near him. A sporting priest was not then—any more than a sporting parson now—a very remarkable object. Bishops, abbots, and priors, followed game of all kinds, as keenly as lay nobles; and the inferior orders of the clergy often indulged in the example set by those whom the parlance of rank called their betters. But the churchman who now excited Vrank's observation was clearly no beneficed monk, or regular incumbent; but rather one of those mendicant friars who levied contributions on the rich, and wrung their hard earnings from the poor, during perpetual rounds of imposture and beggary. It was therefore natural enough that he should have marked the Duke of Burgundy for his prey on this occasion, hovering round till fatigue might make him languid and liberal; as a falcon hangs over a doomed bird, till the very lassitude of fear makes it resign itself to be plucked and bled, with scarce a resisting struggle.

At length, on a sudden cessation from the chace, the birds being driven far and near, and their consequent

scarcity throwing the dogs at fault, on the edge of a close coppice, Philip, parched with heat, reined in his horse, and looking round, he was surprised to find himself almost alone. Close attendance on all occasions was so much a matter of course that he had not earlier thought of ascertaining whether he possessed it now, for no want had reminded him that he was mortal; but the necessity of quenching his thirst brought him to a sense of his nature, and he looked about him for a stream of water and a drinking horn, in the humility of drowthy despotism.

Jacob Wonters, used to his master's wont, immediately prepared to supply him, adding from his flask a small portion of qualifying cordial to the pure liquid caught from a running brook hard by. Vrank Van Borselen pulled up his bridle, and uncovered his head in due etiquette; and Spalatro also doffed his cap, while he patted the neck of the fiery horse, which had been furnished him expressly, that his practised hand might tame its unruly temper.

"Wonters, how's this?" said Philip, in a subdued tone, and with an impatient glance to the right and left. "We are alone?"

"Would that we were, your highness!" answered the armourer, as he mixed the draught.

"Is no one near us but these two?" asked the duke, feeling at the same moment, as if instinctively, for the dagger which hung inside his doublet.

"None other but yon begging friar within the copse, may it please your grace—and I like neither his looks nor the way he has been watching us."

"Who meanest thou? I see none but Sir Francon and the Italian."

"Look sharper in among the trees, your highness, and you'll see one who has followed you close and marked you well, for full an hour gone."

"A begging brother, say you? there's nought to apprehend from him, good Jacob, but an attack on my purse. These fellows rob us in the name of God, and a couple of monton d'ors can send even a prince to Paradise, if the benison of a bare-legged monk may carry him so far. Come, Jacob, hap what will, or bide what may, I must alight. Sir Florival is pressed to the utmost of his bear-

ing; he shakes under me in his fore limbs. I was wrong to mount him to-day so soon after his fever. Aid me, fellow, to dismount!"

"The good beast trembles, sure enough, and the white foam oozes from his skin, my noble master," said Wonters, with an uneasy look. "Bad signs, too—it may be that he snuffs the scent of evil sooner than your princely eyes may spy out danger. I like not your red-bearded friar—do not dismount, good, your highness—put spurs to flank and follow me—I know this path through the forest."

"Tut, tut, Jacob," replied the duke, ashamed to own to himself, much less to his follower, that a thrill of superstitious fear crept through him, and resolved to keep it down—"Tut, tut, thou art too scrupulous to-day. Hast seen St. Withold on the wold? Has the Elfin Shepherd crossed thee on the plains, or did the whistle-bird chirp the death-warning in thine ear? Give me the horn—I must repose here. We're two to two, man—and thy hunting blade is keen at point and edge.—Give me the horn!"

With these words Philip threw himself from his horse, but waved his hand with an authoritative air, as both Vrank Borselen and Spalatro made a movement of approach to his assistance. Vrank's blood boiled at the affront, and he vowed that his services should not be a second time rejected by the haughty and capricious prince, who, after the scene of yesterday, could thus confound him with a scurvy master-at-arms. Had Vrank known what notions flashed across Philip's mind, at the moment that he repulsed his offered aid, he had pardoned him on the spot.

"This will refresh your grace, while a mouthful or two of the stream will give new courage to Sir Florival—may we then set off, I pray you, my lord?" said Wonters, presenting the drinking horn to the duke, who had sat down on a heath-covered bank, and taking with the other hand the bridle which Philip resigned to him. But as the latter raised the discoloured draught to his lips, a new pang of suspicion darted across his brain, the created heritage of despotism, as indelible as the branded mark placed on the brow of Cain.

"Jacob!" exclaimed Philip, "hast thou kept the flask to thyself all day? Did no one drink from it? Didst not

entrust it to the hands of yon Italian, by whose side thou hast ridden so long?"

"My noble lord," said Wonters, earnestly, "my long-tried prudence might save me from such a surmise—the flask has never quitted my pouch, nor been unstopped till now, since the 'squire of the buffet gave it to me full this morn at starting."

"Curse on this awkward arm!" cried Philip, even while the armourer was speaking, and letting fall the horn, as if by accident to the ground. "But never heed it now—the cordial is spilt—no matter—no, no, good Jacob—I'll none of it—it shakes the nerves—a draught of the plain brook is still more bracing than this fermented mixture—never heed, never heed!"

While he quickly uttered these words he picked up the empty horn, and carefully shaking out every drop that still drained from its bottom, he plunged it in the stream, rinsed it more than once, then quaffed a bumper of the pure water, happily unagonized by a doubt that the very weeds on the rivulet's brink might have conspired to poison him.

Ere the horn was again from his head, the begging friar, having tied his nag to the branch of a tree, advanced with bended body and humble mien towards the duke. One of his hands was advanced, holding a leathern pouch for the receipt of contributions; the other was concealed under his cloak. As he came forward, the duke could not resist a throb of apprehension, for the infection of Wonters's alarm found him pre-disposed for its contagion. Treachery seemed to form the atmosphere of the wild scene around him, and fate seemed to have thrown him into its desolation, a sacrifice to his own fool-hardy imprudence. Wonters, still more startled than the duke, sprang immediately towards him, as if to intercept and accost the friar, and he loosened at the same moment his hold of Sir Florival's bridle. The horse feeling himself free, plunged across the little stream, and, starting forward in all the freshness of liberty, galloped wide over the plain.

"Heaven wills it so!" thought Philip, mistaking Wonters's conduct; "even this ingrate is leagued against me, and delivers me up to his fellow conspirators. Now, then, Burgundy, to die with the dignity becoming thy race and station! Well, friend, what wouldst thou?" asked Philip,

with his most imperious tone, his memory darting back at the instant to the scene, oft read, in which the glance of Marius' eye, paralyzed his intended murderer. But the man now addressed was of a different mould of mind from that faint hearted slave and would be villain.

"What would I, duke?" replied he; "the contribution of a mighty prince to the funds of my poor order."

"Thou comest too close, sirrah," said Philip, retreating a step or two, and putting a hand to his dagger, as the bold beggar strode nearer and nearer with every word he spoke.

"I have made a vow, Duke Philip, to close on you one day, and have watched long for time and place; your offering, good duke, in my pouch—your offering, duke, your offering—this, then, to thy tyrant heart!"

A hostile movement of arm, accompanied each word, and Philip was not silent or inactive the while. He hallooed out lustily, and parried each well aimed blow, till at last the assassin's dagger struck against his breast, and broke short, while the duke stood unharmed, but was soon forced to grapple with his enemy.

"Help, Wonters, help!" cried he, as the baffled villain closed furiously on him with the broken blade, spite of his efforts to keep him at bay. The armourer had turned round from his pursuit of the horse, and was running to the call, while Spalatro, who saw what passed, shouted aloud and pressed forward his horse, and bounding over every obstacle was soon close to the duke. Vrank Van Borselen, who had been looking out in another direction from the moment of the duke's insulting gesture, now turned rapidly at the shout, and seeing Philip in a retreating combat of dagger to dagger with the friar, he dashed forward after Spalatro, drawing his short hunting-sword as his courser galloped on. Wonters was just placed between him and the duke, and seeing, as he thought, both cavaliers flying on to immolate his master, he boldly flung himself before the one next him, and seizing Vrank's bridle, he struck at him with his sword, vociferating Flemish imprecations in fierce fluency. Vrank, paying back the compliment he received, believed Wonters to be an accomplice in the plot against Philip's life, and he steadily gave point against the armourer's loose assault, wounded him in the neck, and forced him to relinquish his grasp of the bridle, as he shrunk

back from pain. In another bound or two, Vrank was close beside the group; and as he raised his hand to smite Spalatro, certain that he too was an accomplice in the intended murder, he saw the Italian, to his astonishment and delight, come close up behind the assassin and plunge his poniard into his side as he was still grappling with Philip; while at the same moment he read in the villain's face the features of one of the actors in the scene of the Zeven-volden. We need scarcely say he gazed on Giles Postel.

The rush of thought that filled Vrank's brain, was one of those wonderful movements of the human mind, when it takes in at once a flood of light, every minute particle of which it can separate and examine in prompt micrography. That this fellow was suborned by Jacqueline, an associate of Van Monfoort, and a crowd of other conclusions formed the sum of Vrank's instant conviction. The horror of the notion overpowered that of the attempted crime; and an impulse, even stronger than anxiety for Philip's safety, hurried him closer still to the gasping wretch, that he might snatch from his dying breath the secret of his real employer. Vrank panted with excessive emotion as he sprang from his horse, grasped the fellow in one arm, and held him up to save him from being suffocated by the blood, which gushed profusely from his mouth and nostrils, as well as from his wounded side. As Spalatro coolly wiped the crimson stain from his poniard, Philip stood, breathing short and amazed at all that passed so rapidly, and to find that he was not killed on the spot by the two so lately suspected men, who now seemed only anxious to save him, and secure his assailant, while Wonters came forward towards his chief, in unflinching fidelity and coarse contempt of pain.

"Speak, wretched man; who art thou? why hast thou attempted this deed? who set thee on?" cried Vrank, close into the ear of the writhing villain in his arms. A fresh discharge of blood totally prevented a reply, and Postel seemed actually choking, as though death had already seized him, unabsolved and unconfessed.

"Good God! He dies, he dies!" cried Vrank, at the same time raising him up, and striving to relieve him, as if it was some dear friend whose sufferings he would alleviate. Giles Postel looked convulsively on him, as if to read

the cause of such solicitude; and he immediately recognised the young stranger of the Zeven-volden, whom he had seen receiving the girdle from Jacqueline's hands. The diabolical temper of his mind gave an instant's respite to bodily pain. He gulped down the heart's blood which was mounting to his lungs, and grasping Vrank's hand, the following words gurgled incoherently in his throat :

"The countess—the girdle—the forest—the English lord—" all the connecting words were unintelligible.

"Is the dog yet alive?" said Spalatro, stalking close to him, and raising his poniard to complete his work; but Vrank caught his arm, and hurriedly expressed the importance of hearing the villain's revelation. Philip, reassured of his own safety, and convinced that his suspicions had been misplaced, anxiously seconded Vrank's appeal, and interposed between Spalatro's dagger and Postel's body; at the same time holding back Wonters, who had now come up, and was blindly rushing against the group, still believing that his master was beset by three conspirators, and unable to distinguish the real condition of any.

"What said he, Sir Francon?" eagerly asked the duke. "Did he mention names? did he confess to his associates?"

"The countess!" muttered the wounded man, gasping in the new effort.

"Which! which, fellow?" asked Philip, straining down close to him. Postel attempted to answer, but could not utter a word. Failing in speech, he pointed to a ring, on the hand that was pressed against his heaving chest.

"Again, again!" cried Philip—"new damning proof of her infamy! Her father's signet ring, by Heavens!" and these words of condemnation found a too deep echo in Vrank Van Borselen's heart, for he at once recognised the sparkling gem, in its rich-wrought setting, which had particularly caught his attention among the others which ornamented the fair hand that he had pressed in his during the perilous contest in the Zeven-volden. He could speak no more. His mind was overpowered by the conviction of Jacqueline's guilt, and he gave no heed to Philip's continued but vain efforts to extract further information from Giles Postel. At length, the latter seemed by some violent internal effort to regain at once strength, consciousness, and the power of free utterance.

"Ay," cried he, "I am now better—I knew it would pass over—it will take a deeper thrust to do Giles Postel to death. Ah, Philip, you have escaped me!—I little thought you wore armour under your pourpoint, or I should have struck you in the throat, not the breast. But your day will come—my next blow shall—"

Ere he could finish his ferocious sentence he sunk back, exhausted on the earth.

"Let the villain die," said Vrank, in ineffable disgust: "he has spoken too much."

"No, no," cried Philip, "let's raise him up again. Give him water, good Sir Francon. Here, Spalatro, loose the buttons of his doublet. He must not escape me thus—he has yet treasures to reveal.—See, he revives."

The distorted eyes did once more give a blood-shot stare of consciousness. They fixed first on Philip, then turned aside and rested on Vrank.

"You wear her favour—so does Gloucester—Fitz-walter—so do—I—even I!—I saw her covered with Flemish blood on the field of Gouda—I clasped her close in the silent hall of Amersfort—I—Let Duke John look to himself.—The countess's collar is even now on his throat. It was *your* hand that dealt me this blow," continued he, suddenly fixing his stern look on Spalatro—"you—I have marked you—and may perdition seize me—may my soul—"

"He is gone!" exclaimed Philip, in an accent of deep regret, while a short convulsive struggle stopped the ruffian's words; and the upturned eyes and falling jaw gave to the accustomed witnesses of violent death the unerring tokens that all was over.

"He is gone—but he has said enough—she is condemned for ever. Tear open his garments, and let's see what secrets may lurk on his person.—Let's discover who he is."

Jacob Wonters, who had recovered from the shock of his sudden but slight hurt, and who now began to see the real state of things, immediately busied him in dragging off the monkish disguise from the corpse, and closely examined the articles of dress. But no clue was found of Postel's name or calling; and while the examination went on, the sounds of horns were heard approaching; and in a little more, St.

Pol, John Vilain, and some others came riding up in anxious search for the duke, who gave to his cousin count a rapid sketch of what had passed. As soon as John Vilain saw the dead body, he exclaimed,

"By Heavens! that is Giles Postel, Van Monfoort's squire!"

"Van Monfoort's!" cried Philip, St. Pol, and Vrank Van Borselen all together; and the two former required but an interchange of glances to read their mutual conviction that the knight was not guiltless of the criminal attempt of his squire. Their farther suspicions did not then find vent; but while the duke gave orders to Wonters to let the body be buried where it then lay, and graciously acknowledged Spalatro for the saviour of his life, Vrank remarked that Philip passed him silently by, with a look that spoke far more enmity than indifference. While the others of the now increasing cavalcade rode away, he remained behind with the corpse, not without a special object connected with its burial.

This adventure formed a fertile subject of discourse and conjecture for the rest of the day; and Philip, tired of the hollow or exaggerated congratulations of interested friends or cringing familiars, took refuge in the winding mazes of the dance, which closed the evening's entertainment, an amusement in which his excellence was equal to his delight.

The next morning saw a total change in the halls and courts of Hesdin Castle. The whole of the numerous company had dispersed soon after dawn. Every individual had set off on his separate destination. Bedford, with his dutchess, and numerous suite, for London, to exert his influence with Gloucester, and prevent his committing England in a quarrel with Philip; leaving the while to a commission of great lords at Paris the care of his nephew's (Henry the Sixth) possessions against the untiring attempts of Charles the Seventh, and his enterprising, though at that time unlucky friends. St. Pol to Brabant, to look to the government of his dying brother's dominions. De Richemont and his brother the duke to their dominions in Brittany, to strain every nerve of hostility towards England; while the foreign knights, who had tilted at the jousts, feasted at the board, and danced in the hall, now

wended on their various ways of errantry or war, loaded with proofs of Philip's profuseness.

The vassals of Burgundy, his ministers and followers all, soon occupied their several posts of preparation for the expedition against Holland, the preliminary points of which had been long going forward, under all this apparent abandonment to pleasure and dissipation. Not a day was lost, and nothing was neglected that could tend to ensure success. Every moment which Philip could snatch from the council-room or camp was divided between dalliance in the company of his beloved countess, superintendence of his various suits of armour with Jacob Wonters, and trials of skill, and lessons of martial exercise with Spalatro.

Intelligence of a somewhat startling nature was, on one of the latest of those days of preparation, received from Brussels. It announced the seizure and execution of a young student, for an attempt to strangle Duke John with an iron collar. The dying words of Giles Postel were remembered on this occasion, and not one individual in Hesdin Castle had a doubt of Jacqueline's complicity in John Chevalier's crime.

CHAPTER IV.

JACQUELINE's friends, the faithful and victorious Hoeks, were indefatigable in obtaining information of the Duke of Burgundy's movements; and every possible preparation was made to meet the coming shock, by those whose courage or despair made them equal to the crisis. The English force, the main reliance of the common cause, was concentrated in the island of Schowen, which private information had pointed out as the intended point of attack, by the formidable army which now day by day approached from Picardy and Flanders. The contingents from the various towns of Holland and Zeeland, which were faithful to

Jacqueline, hastened to that rendezvous for the main division of her forces; but serious defection from her cause became evident as the danger approached; and though some volunteers from the chapter and city of Utrecht came frequently straggling up, the promised reinforcement of the bishop's men-at-arms and pikemen had not yet made their appearance. Several letters, indeed, reached Jacqueline from her reverend ally, cheering her on with words of advice and frothy phrases of good-will—but Zweder Van Culembourg's name was not yet fairly committed, in such a way as to entitle it to be placed on the muster-roll of the just cause.

Jacqueline still held her little court at Amersfort, the strongest and most secure of all her towns. Her mother remained with her, upholding, in appearance, her spirits and courage, but in reality causing, by her presence, an effect almost sufficient to paralyze her native energy.

Fitz-walter had set off to take the command of his little army. The gay-hearted Louis had also left his sister, and repaired to the post of active duty. Rudolf Van Diepenholt was following up his own interests, the better to enable him to serve Jacqueline with the chapter of Utrecht; so that with the exception of the rude and often unmanageable chiefs of the friendly faction, who formed her counsel, Jacqueline was left almost wholly dependent on the resources of her own powerful mind. But these did not fail her in this important crisis. She bore well and firmly her many mortifications and privations; and reposing solely on Benina Beyling's fidelity, she seemed straining herself to the utmost pitch of endurance against ill-fate.

The forebodings of coming ruin which she could not repress were not a little strengthened by Ludwick Van Monfoort, who now returned from his mission to Hesdin, and bluntly told to his anxious mistress all that befel him there. He detailed his having contrived, by bribing a servant, to slip a warning billet into Duke Philip's plate even at his banquet board; and his having been obliged to leave the castle without otherwise being able to thwart Giles Postel's diabolical designs. Whether they had succeeded or failed he knew not; but he took care to add fresh and acute pain to Jacqueline's uncertainty on that head, by informing her that the young Kabblejaw hunter, in whose

praise, he had so often in his own despite held forth, was no other than a minion of Burgundy, a vowed partisan of John of Brabant, and son of the worst enemy to Jacqueline, himself, and the party of the Hoeks in general.

This was an agonising winding up of Jacqueline's suffering on Vrank's account. She had clung to the hope that, though a Kabblejaw and a follower of Philip, he might have borne a name of no deep importance in the cause of faction, and might have been open to inducements to relinquish the service of tyranny. But to hear that he was the son and heir to the hereditary hate of the Borse lens, and one of the pledged creatures of her odious husband and his infamous cause, was a climax of unlooked for despair.

"Well!" she cried in the first moment of privacy, after the receipt of this afflicting news,—“Well! the vision is dissolved, the prism shattered for ever! He is lost to me, without a shadow of chance! Oh, pride, pride, where art thou sunk? Why dost thou not rouse up to strengthen me in this humiliated hour? Lost to me ere found—snatched away ere clasped—my bitter foe—hating my very name, perhaps, and vilifying the heart that would freely bleed to death, were the author of its wounds but worthy. Rouse from this lethargy of love, my soul! for ever be forgotten this base episode in my life! Let me rush into the teeth of my foes—alone—hating and despising mankind, and shaming by my death the slanderers of my life! Alas! alas! this is all boast and bravado—I can no more oppose the torrent that assails me—this last blow bends me to the earth. Oh, pride, dignity, consciousness of right! where are ye now? How unavailing all to stem the tide of luckless love?” and the tears of the high-minded woman gushed out, a bitter tribute to the inherent tyranny of that passion which conquers the best and bravest spirits.

A few days following this, direct intelligence came from England that Duke Humphrey had publicly avowed his marriage with Elinor Cobham, who, as Dutchess of Gloucester, and wife of England's protector, had at once stepped to a height only short of the throne, and found many a too ready apologist for the arts which procured her misplaced elevation. Jacqueline heard this intelligence in the midst of her little council. All around her were influenced

with indignation at this base betrayal of every tie of honour, and every claim of duty. Countess Marguerite vowed deep and bitter vengeance on the perjured Gloucester.—Van Monfoort cursed him with all his heart and soul, at the same time admitting that he believed him to have been the sport of a fiend in human form.

Jacqueline alone maintained a calm and cold demeanour, which she did not mistake for dignity, nor shall we represent it as such. It was in fact indifference, which so often passes for self-command—total indifference. Had she heard the newssome days earlier, her proud blood might have stirred more rapidly, and anger have repelled, or at least rebuked the wrong. But now the defection of Gloucester, which she had long made up her mind to expect, came as an event the most common-place; nor did she even feel a throb of triumph at the avowed degradation in which he was overwhelmed.

Apparently dead to all private feelings, she seemed to concentrate all her powers for one grand public struggle; and it was only in the solitude of her chamber, and with the communings of her heart that she gave way to even one voluntary betrayal of her wretchedness. In the meantime the preparations for war went on. The enemy approached; and Jacqueline was resolved to put herself, as usual, at the head of her troops, and stifle, in the throng of action, the intolerable torment of her mind.

The year was now advancing to its close. Long files of water-fowl were seen stretching across the sky in inland flight. The foliage was swept from the trees, and the bare branches creaked responsive to the wintry blasts, while the crisped leaves crackled beneath the feet of the traveler. The sunbeams or the breezes formed alike free passage through the forest depths; and the skeleton forms of nature called up the reflections of the moralist, or warned the mere sensual observer of the wants which come in the train of the world's annual decay. Jacqueline, of all beings existing, sympathised the most keenly with the coming dreariness and desolation. She felt that the early winter of her life was setting in; and her withered hopes, and the frozen sources of joy seemed to say, that for her there would be no spring.

Indulging this sad mood, she used to sit for hours, when-

ever she could snatch time from the labours of the council-room, or the forms of her little court, in her private chamber, watching the red sun as it sunk behind the frosty haze of a Dutch twilight, or the moon struggling up through the dense vapour, in colours of darkness and blood, and growing gradually clear and bright as it arose, like the disembodied soul escaping from the stained atmosphere of mortality. A solemn strain of thought seemed at such times to flow, like mental music, through the high-strung chords of Jacqueline's feelings. Contempt of the world and its wasting wishes was settling into a profound principle within her mind; and she seemed to have reached as near as possible to that unimpassioned tone of high philosophy for which she had hitherto vainly longed, when a circumstance took place that hurled her at once from this pedestal of unnatural pride, and brought her down once more to the level of mortal suffering and sympathy.

On such an evening as we have described, in the month of December, 1425, our heroine (who was then beyond all rivalry the heroine of her age) retired early from the afternoon meeting of the council, as was her wont, and sat at her high and narrow casement, which opened out directly into, and was on a level with a terrace in the spacious but gloomy gardens of the palace. She had given orders that she should not be disturbed. Her scanty suite had withdrawn. Benina Beyling was occupied, inditing, by her orders, a private despatch to Lord Fitz-walter, in reply to a letter expressive of his continued devotion to her cause, and of Gloucester's orders that he should uphold it to the last extremity. Countess Marguerite was busily employed, with Van Monfoort, one of the Hemsteds, and other leaders of the Hoeks, in her own cabinet, on some point of immediate importance; so that Jacqueline reckoned on an hour or more of that complete solitude in which her mother was so little disposed to indulge her, from dread of its aiding the growth of that morbid melancholy which she perceived to be fast sapping her health and peace of mind. The plain oaken chair on which Jacqueline sat, during that and many another such hour of sad reflection, is still preserved;* and its high-seated,

* In the Museum of the Hague.

low-backed, and altogether inconvenient construction seems (to a fanciful mind at least) to give force to the picture of harsh suffering of which its nearly-forsaken and persecuted occupant was then the victim. A table was before her and on it lay an illuminated manuscript of the story of Sir Lanval, who was carried off by the fairy Tryamour. The vellum pages were from time to time turned over by Jacqueline's mechanical fingers; but while her eyes wandered over the grotesque embellishments, they took in nothing of the quaintly told story, which at another epoch might have so much interested and amused her. A lute lay by her side, but it was untouched, save when in a moment of listlessness she now and then swept her hand across the strings, without method or object, producing such wild and unformed melody as though it was the wind that sighed wantonly over the instrument, and made it discourse the music of a dream. As she gazed out into the garden, her eyes, which had for some time been fixed on what is commonly called vacancy, (a phrase that expresses but the void within,) were suddenly filled with the observation of a figure, that caused her an instant pang of astonishment, doubt, and terror. There was something in the motion of the figure, which was that of a cloak-enveloped man, as it glided stealthily through the twilight shade, that proved it, as she thought, to be not of the earth on which it trod. But before she had time to follow up her train of doubt on that point, the approach of the object, and her discovery of its features convinced her, without any force of logical deduction or proof of argument. She plainly recognised the pale sad countenance of him who had so long, irresistibly and uncalled for, filled her mental vision, in the bloom and animation of the inspiring moments passed in the heart-stirring excitement of the Zeven-volden.

There are certain moods of mind in which conviction on any point brings a whole host of reasoning into immediate play, accompanying the effect, which in the regular sequence of thought it might be supposed to precede. Such was at this moment the frame of Jacqueline's mind, prepared for the reception of the mystery that presented itself, and weighing the evidences at the same instant that it admitted the fact.

"He is dead!" faintly uttered she; and the tremulous movement of her lips continued, from the effect of the thrill that shook her whole frame, for many seconds after the words had ceased to leave their whispered impress on the vibrating circles of air.

"He is dead!" repeated the inward echoes of thought, and the sound of the sentiment seemed to fall heavily upon her heart. "No living man of his party or opinions could have found entrance here, or have dared to brave the perils of such an intrusion. He is dead, and his spirit is come to warn me that *my* hour is near at hand."

"Countess Jacqueline!" said the figure, in slow, solemn, and somewhat stern accents, which thrilled through our heroine in sepulchral murmurings; and as the words were uttered, the speaker stood full before her, on the elevated steps which led to the parterre, and with an attitude at once respectful and dignified, he removed the cap, the dark plume of which had served to cast his features into deeper shade.

"I come," continued he, "to *fulfil* a sacred mission:" and as he spoke, with eyes firmly fixed on her he addressed, a glow of real living crimson rushed to his cheek and brow. What it was that Vrank Van Borselen perceived in the expression of the face before him to cause this sudden emotion, may be imagined by the lively fancy that can picture, though it has never known, the prompt intelligence which darts a meaning to the lover's keen-searching eye. The secret volume of thought, opened to him by Jacqueline's electrical glance, might well have caused a rush of blood from his heart. He read at once the whole history of her feelings towards him. But had any repelling doubt checked this rushing flood of conviction, her tongue and her whole person gave instant evidence, to ratify the terms in which her looks had signed the absolute surrender of her heart.

"Thank Heaven, thank Heaven, he lives!" cried Jacqueline, in the impassioned tone of overwhelming joy: "it is he, he himself! oh, God, this is too much!"

And as he spoke, she sprang from her chair and flung herself towards Vrank. But the inspiration that urged the exclamation and the movement, acting on her overwrought frame of mind, and too highly excited state of

nerve, a throb of intense pain darted at the same moment through both her head and heart, and she was falling utterly helpless to the ground, when Vrank caught her in his arms, and became instantly almost as much deprived of strength or perception as she.

Every transition of such a scene is electrical. The mind's lightning flashes quick through the storm-gusts of passion.

"Come in, come in!" cried Jacqueline, in almost frantic tones, recovering her whole strength and self-command. "You are lost, if we are seen!" and, without breaking from the embrace in which she was still clasped, she inclined her form inwards from the platform, so that a step or two (which Vrank to his life's end persisted in believing to have been made by her alone) brought the almost unconscious pair clear inside the casement door-way; and the next moment that allowed either of them a certain perception of what passed, found Jacqueline reclining once more in her oaken arm-chair; and Vrank on his knees before her, pressing her cold hand to his bosom, and imprinting it with kisses that might have warmed a marble statue.

"Rash man!" said Jacqueline, at length, but not in accents of reproach or anger, "how could you have ventured this step? Is it thus you would serve me, by dooming yourself to ruin?"

"To ruin!" repeated Vrank, in a tone of terrified reality that made Jacqueline shudder again.

"To ruin! Oh, God, what oracle is it that thus speaks my doom! This is indeed ruin!"

Yet while he spoke, and felt the whole depth of the sentiment, he made not the slightest effort to escape from the peril so avowed and felt; but remained fixed in his attitude of devotion, at the shrine which all his sense of sight pronounced to be that of an idol which it was little short of infamy to worship.

"You are too truly risking your own destruction, if discovered here," returned Jacqueline, taking a view widely different of Vrank's situation than the one which overwhelmed him, and marvelling not a little at the contradiction between his words, which spoke so keen a sense of danger, and his actions which seemed to defy it. But there was nothing in this that was not flattering to her;

and even at such a moment she was not displeased at so powerful a tribute to her influence. She felt instantly convinced that Vrank had abandoned every thing for her—but her swimming head and throbbing heart were not in unison with any profound plan of self-examination.

"But fear not," continued she, in soothing and re-assuring accents, and in the first impulse of her generous gratitude—"fear not, for your risk is mine; the peril that assails you shall strike me as well. *I* care nothing for consequences now—you have made your cause mine—happen what may, we stand or fall together."

Nothing could exceed the mental agony that agitated Vrank while these words were spoken. He knew not what to do or say. He felt rivetted to the floor on which his knee was still bent. A spell of ruin seemed indeed upon him; and he felt as if he only wanted strength to put himself at once to death, and escape from the terrible situation into which his weakness had plunged him. It was bad enough to know that he had violated every one of his own well-digested intentions, sacrificed his reason, committed his principles—but there was still a keener pang in the reproach of having misled a deceived and confiding woman into the avowal of a passion which he dared not suffer himself to return, and which, be her errors or crimes what they might, bore the stamp of genuine and intense devotion to him. And perhaps self-love came in for its share in his feeling as well as in hers, to aid in the bewildering maze of sensations in which he seemed lost. Be it as it might, he felt a sudden throng of excuses and arguments in Jacqueline's favour all at once rushing on his mind. Some internal conviction seemed to tell him "she is innocent"—but he heard not the still small whisper of unconscious vanity which added, "How could the being who loves me thus be criminal?"

The current of Vrank's reflections was now rapidly turning, and it would soon have set all one way, but for that righting principle of stern duty, which on many an occasion had preserved him from excess, and which now suddenly shifted the whole machinery of his mind, displaying, as though by the touch of a magic wand, the direct reverse of the reasoning by which he was suffering himself to be carried along. Action and thought were equally prompt.

He dropped the fair hand from his heretofore convulsive grasp, rose quickly from his kneeling posture, and, once more standing upright and firm, he felt the force of independence new-nerving his mind and body.

"Countess Jacqueline," said he, at length, with infinitely more tenderness, but not less firmness than at first, "this has been a trying moment for us both. God knows it took me by surprise—that is my sole excuse, before Heaven or my own conscience—let it be so as well with you. I am overwhelmed at the scene that has passed—I should deserve to be struck dead if I had contemplated or planned it. I sought your presence, not with one view ungenerous or presumptuous, and bitterly do I lament the error into which my coming has led you."

Jacqueline listened to this solemnly spoken preface with breathless interest, and she gazed on him intently as he went on.

"If the hurry of the event, the memory of a former scene, or the over-keen sense of my danger, has forced you into the betrayal of a too acute sensibility, think not that I could avail myself of it unworthily. Regain your dignity as I have recovered my place."

"Away with dignity and false distinctions from this hour!" exclaimed Jacqueline, seeing only in Vrank's demeanour, a slavish veneration for her rank, and urged by her native sense of station to take the lead in the conference, and set right the timid youth as to her feelings, both for his sake and her own.

"No," continued she, "this is not the season for cold forms—the full heart spurns them now. Your place is found, nor is my pride debased. I know you to be noble, equal in birth to any, as something tells me you are superior in soul to most. The barrier between us is broken down—I forget all, but the sympathy that tells—that *commands* me to esteem and honour you."

Vrank's brain seemed to reel again. He could not bear the brilliant glance of the full eyes that beamed on him, but he let his own drop their looks upon the ground.

"Speak then, freely, valiant and noble knight," said Jacqueline; "tell me what my heart anticipates, yet yearns to have confirmed, that you have given up the cause of

tyranny and wrong, and are come to make mine invincible!"

"Countess, you drive me mad!" cried Vrank, with great emotion, throwing aside his cloak, and tearing open the breast of his pourpoint, as he spoke. "I can no longer bear the torture of your misplaced confidence. Alas! I am not your friend or partizan, though I do feel the path of duty is leading me to utter misery. Look here, and here!"

Jacqueline in her turn, became almost speechless and stupefied, at marking the red cross of Burgundy still on his breast, and the placquet, which had been so minutely described by Van Monfoort, fastened to his arm.

"How then came you here?" murmured she, after a pause, "and wherefore?"

"I made no display of these badges, which a solemn vow forces me to bear; and this token procured me free passage through your gates."

Jacqueline covered her face with her hand, on discovering the ring she had given to Giles Postel.

"Let me hide out my shame!" exclaimed she. "I ask not how or where you obtained that fatal gem; but why, in mercy tell me why, thus badged, thus decked—to wound me to the heart's core—why art thou here?"

"I am here, Countess Jacqueline, at the behest of honour and chivalry. God pity me, if less high inducements helped to urge me on! I meant not, St. Andrew be my witness, to outrage one feeling of your heart by wantonly displaying those badges of my service and my faith. But, mark ye, noble lady, this still more precious gage. It was given me in high and generous confidence—I could not return it but by mine own hand, direct into that which had placed it here."

With these words Vrank deliberately unfastened the girdle from round his neck, and drew it from his bosom.

"Return it!" exclaimed Jacqueline, in a voice that was the true type of her sinking heart. "And why return it?—why not wear it still?—the feeling that prompted the gift is still active in my heart."

Insensible to all arguments of upholding pride, Jacqueline felt her own voice fail, and her heart beat wildly; and

without a thought of humiliation or shame, she was conscious that the warm tears ran streaming down her cheeks. Vrank saw this unerring proof of anguish. He felt that his knee bent involuntarily, and that his heart again did homage, and perhaps, had a single other word escaped from Jacqueline's lips, he had fallen once more at her feet, and vowed himself to her for ever. But she spoke not, for in that hour of sad sincerity she was not capable of forming an artificial thought, or uttering a word for effect; and Vrank was able to preserve the utmost force of his mind, all needed in so trying and touching a case.

He was too much affected by her distress, and we may confess, too painfully gratified by it, to admit a notion of its being unreal; but he recalled in his own despite, like some desperate resource of a drowning man, every thing that, by telling against her, might aid in saving him from the snare that sensibility had prepared for him. If he encouraged these thoughts, as they flashed across him, it was less in the spirit of accusation than in right of self-defence.—The broken, but damning revelations of Giles Postel—the long believed charges relative to her poisoned uncle—her misrepresented connexion with Gloucester—Duke Philip's diatribes—the hate of his own parents—the fury of his party, all rose at once before Vrank; and as yet, he had not heard one word of justification from Jacqueline's lips, except, indeed, their avowal of her feelings towards himself. With many men, that had proved sufficient to absolve her from all and heavier charges than Vrank's memory had recorded against her. But, be it a merit or a defect, his mind was of a different mould; for, though intensely gratified by, and grateful for her evident attachment, and though thoroughly surprised by the discovery, he preserved the balance between reason and feeling; and his self-respect, preserved him from being overpowered by the mere force of sighs or tears.

All that we have endeavoured briefly to trace, passed with infinitely greater rapidity in our hero's mind; but the words and actions consequent on his thoughts, were less abrupt than their written description can be. He summoned up his utmost fortitude, and held forward the girle in his outstretched hand. Jacqueline mechanically accepted it. He felt relieved from an oppressive burden—she seem-

ed as though the link which bound her to her last hope was severed.

"Heaven be praised!" said Vrank, "I have fulfilled the duty of a true and honourable knight. Countess, I have worn your favour worthily, and had I never known it for yours, so may I rest in Heaven, no mortal man should have ever wrenched it from me, or carried it attaint, but with the sacrifice of my life or at the price of his. But being yours, 'twas not for me to bear a badge that belied my every principle of duty and of reason. You have a right to further explanation, but I cannot voluntarily wound where I have already done unmeant mischief. I must be silent, and let your candour supply my want of words."

"Speak on! oh, speak on! you can say nothing now to do me deeper harm!"

"These words and looks afflict me, madam, to my heart's depths. Better that I retire, and leave you to forget you ever knew me, or honoured me with a thought."

"Oh, stay awhile, even in this atmosphere of terrible danger. Explain this conduct, as cruel as it is perhaps just."

"Let me then speak in my own justification. I urge not my fealty to my lawful prince, my fidelity to my family creed, all stamping me your political opponent; but God, who reads my heart knows I am not your foe. But as a gentleman, a soldier, an unpledged and true knight, could I wear the favour of her, all princess, all enchantress as she be, whose badge is also worn by Gloucester and Fitzwalter? whose troth is bound to one man, and whose heart is in the keeping of another; ay, ay, mayhap shared with two or *more*; whose fair fame bears attaint, and oh! with deep pain is the reproach drawn from my reluctant bosom, whose creatures carry murder into the palace of her husband, and against her cousin's breast; and one of whom, the lowest and vilest of mankind, bore the stamp of his terrible commission in that very signet-ring which I dragged from his death-stiffened finger, where her hand had placed it. Oh, pardon me if I speak too bluntly; 'tis the open heart that prompts the candid phrase. I see how my words move you; silence my tongue for ever, and lift a load off my mind, by one sentence of denial, one word of justification!"

During this speech, in which Vrank had gone much farther than he had intended, Jacqueline felt all the rapid transition from submission to resistance, all that revival of fiery pride and indignation which outraged virtue and hurt dignity could feel. The blood of twenty-four sovereign princes, her predecessors and ancestors, seemed to glow in her veins and swell her heart. Every throb of tenderness was hushed, her tears dried suddenly up. The lassitude of suffering which had before unnerved her was replaced by a prompt tension of mind and frame. She was all at once a heroine, ready to repel a wrong, able to sacrifice happiness, or lay down life in support of her injured honour, but scorning to pronounce one syllable of denial, or urge one plea of defence, against assertions which ought, as she felt, to be annihilated by their very utterance; like the noxious insect which dies from the impurity of its own breath.

Rising up in her chair erect, as though she sat on her sovereign throne—

"Denial!" said she, "justification! What then, is it come to this? Is Jacqueline of Holland to be so accused and so summoned? Is the whole noble line of Bavaria to be dragged to judgment in my person, like some peasant hind, on such charges as these? Oh, God! what have I done to earn this? And you, Sir, who have taught me this bitter lesson—how have I mistaken you—how forgot myself! How could you dare to harbour such thoughts of me, or having them, how venture to form them into speech? If the dignity of a long line of princes could not exempt, might not the privilege of my sex protect me from your outraging words? But I forgive you—it is the prejudice of your birth, and the degradation of your service that are to blame. What could I look for else from a Borselen, a traitorous Kabblejaw, and a hireling of Burgundy?"

While Jacqueline was thus urged on by her impetuous scorn to say much more than in sober resentment she would have done, Vrank was affected in the same tender point in which she had been so deeply hurt. Her galling reproaches goaded his pride, which turned like a wound—

ed deer upon its assailant—and he asked himself, "Is this like innocence? Is it not rather the boisterous tone of conscious guilt?" but his usual clear-sightedness was obscured by his rising irritation, and he did not reflect that symptoms which, in a common person, would have justified his conclusion, were not at all inconsistent with the ire of high station, carried beyond itself, at being accused, and disdaining the notion of defence.

"Madam," said Vrank, with all the calm he could assume, "I must not shrink from these opprobrious epithets, nor do I wince under them. A clear conscience can disprove even worse accusal, as does mine even now."

"A high mind scorns to refute a base charge, as mine does—and so you may tell your tyrant master, at whose bidding mayhap you have offered me this outrage."

"Madam, I see you know me not," replied Vrank; "and for both our sakes I grieve that ever chance has thrown me in the way of your misconception."

"For your own sake, Sir, but for mine, spare your regret. A chance meeting may be forgotten with as much ease as it occurred.—It can cost me little to efface so slight a stain on my memory."

"I should not have thought so erewhile," said Vrank, with a bitter smile, finding it impossible to repress the proud consciousness of the influence which she had so palpably acknowledged.

"That smile of too ready triumph may turn to mortifying bitterness yet, Heer Borselen, when you find that the weakness of the woman is merged in the contempt of the princess. And now, Sir, you are free to retire—your mission of insult being accomplished—making your passage out as best you may."

Vrank swelled with offended pride. He never had been so thoroughly angry either with another or himself. He would have given worlds that it was a man who had thus treated him. All his usual powers of reasoning were whelmed in the angry flood; and he did not at the moment perceive that the source of his emotion was not in the expressions of Jacqueline's contempt, but in the deep felt passion which had just created the sensitiveness that those expressions so painfully irritated.

"I obey you, countess," exclaimed he; "I leave you, and my good sword shall carve its way through the dangers which, as your words imply, are to oppose my retreat."

"Dangers!" cried Jacqueline, the idea of those that might assail him bursting on her like a painful ray of light. "I threatened none—I wished you none, Heaven be my pledge! Go, since you think so basely of me—but go safely.—Wrap well your cloak over those hateful tokens—a hundred deaths await their discovery in these walls!"

"I neither court nor shun death," replied Vrank, moved by her generous anxiety for his safety, "though life gains no new value from this scene."

While he replaced his cap on his head, and flung his cloak across his breast and shoulders, retiring towards the garden the while, Jacqueline felt a new flood of gentle feelings rush within her breast. The fine countenance of the young man, which the dim twilight showed with a softened effect, spoke a volume of deep feelings. His magnanimity of character seemed all at once revealed without an effort on his part, and acknowledged without one qualifying doubt on hers. The effect was irresistible. Hurt pride, wounded dignity, offended virtue, all gave way to the powerful influence of unbounded love; and Jacqueline was on the point of following the impulse that once more urged her towards him, who was in every true essential her lover, when she was interrupted and shocked by the sudden inburst of several armed men, who rushed from the garden; and before Vrank could even throw aside his cloak to grasp his weapon's hilt, he was forcibly seized and violently held captive, in the grasp of half a dozen sinewy hands.

CHAPTER V.

It was Adrian Van Hemsted and some of his brother Hoeks, who, true to the unceremonious fidelity of the times, had burst into their sovereign's presence, arms in their hands, and fury in their hearts, on hearing that a suspicious looking man had passed the guards by favour of the countess's well known signet ring, and having their worst fears for her safety confirmed, by discovering through the casement the hated badge of Burgundy on his breast. Countess Marguerite, hurrying from her own apartment, came close on their heels; and Benina Beyling soon made one in the court retinue which thronged the scene of alarm.

In the confusion of the first moments Jacqueline could only interpose for Vrank's safety, by throwing herself among the group of furious partizans who had seized on him, and mingling commands and supplications for his being held harmless, with the loud vociferations of their rage.

"A Burgundian? A Kabblejaw! A Borselen!" were their first exclamations, as Vrank's person was recognized by those who had witnessed his brief appearance at the jay-shooting of Tergoes.

"Death! death! To the torture, to the torture!" were the next most distinguishable sounds.

"Bury him alive, as we did the traitor Beyling!" cried one.

"Let him be rolled through the streets in a spiked barrel," exclaimed another.

"Torture, torture! death, death! away with him!" chorussed the whole party; while the harsh voice and harsher looks of Countess Marguerite sanctioned each and all of those ferocious proposals, and Jacqueline, supported by Benina, continued her strenuous efforts to interpose between the intended victim and his ready-made destroyers, and postpone, though she had faint hope of finally averting, his fate.

Vrank Van Borselen, though an extremely brave man, the common quality of the age, did not possess that fiery kind of valour which plunges and struggles with danger,

sometimes succeeding to shake it off, but more commonly sinking under the violence it provokes. His courage was more reflective than impetuous; and instead now of wasting his strength in vain efforts to escape, or hurrying on his doom by word or action, he silently listened to the abuse, and passively submitted to the outrage of his assailants. But he all the while prepared both mind and body for a concentrated effort at escape, if a possible opportunity presented itself, or for a dignified resignation to his fate, whatever it might be. That the latter was to be promptly decided and dreadful in its nature there seemed now little doubt!

"Away with him from this presence!" cried Countess Marguerite. "Let him die outside! Despatch him at once!"

A yell of fury answered this demoniac order; and Vrank was dragged out through the casement, despite the convulsive resistance to which he was urged by the horror of immediate death. He was conscious that his cheeks were blanched, for he felt the blood curdling round his heart. But, though he lost his colour, he did not lose his head, the true distinction between natural dread of death, and the power of mind by which it is mastered. His last look, as he was hurried away, was thrown back on Jacqueline, held forcibly in her mother's arms; and in the agonized expression of her pallid face, lit by the glare of torches, which were now lavishly brought in, he read a farewell of consoling sympathy, that neutralized, if it could not reverse, the terrible sentence of destruction. As soon as he was dragged clear of the threshold, and the glass-door furiously closed by the last of the party, several swords were raised, and he saw them gleam as they clashed together to pierce him. But at this moment—the very hair-line verge between life and death—Ludwick Van Monfoort arriving on the spot, on hearing of the general disturbance, burst through the group, flung his broad bulk before the intended victim, whom he instantly recognized, and actually received on his armour covered breast the points of more than one blade, which but for him had laid Vrank low for ever.

"What's this!" cried the intrepid Lord of Urk. "Murder on the threshold of the princess! Hear ye not her shrieks for mercy? Stand back, stand back! See how she rushes forth to save him!" and at the instant Jacque-

line did indeed appear, loudly crying to the murderers, and breaking away from her mother's feeble efforts at detention, while Benina Beyling aided her merciful intentions by throwing aside the casement door, and giving her free egress to the garden. The baffled, but still furious Hoeks, turned for a moment at the piercing sound of their mistress's voice, and Vrank was not the man to let such a critical period pass without one desperate attempt for safety. His eye fixed on one of the long but light handled halberds, used by the guards on duty in the palace, and which lay against the wall. Springing from the grasp of one man, who held by the collar of his cloak, the others having loosened their hold when preparing to put him to death, he bounded towards the weapon, which he relied on more as a means of aiding his escape than of successful defence; and seizing it in both hands, he swept it round and round with his utmost force, striking down more than one of his foes, and making a complete circle among the rest, that quite guaranteed him from their rapier's reach. Profiting by the confusion and the space, he suddenly turned from the palace walls, bounded away with the agility of youth running for life, and was soon far down one of the principal avenues of the garden.

But he was as quickly pursued by several of his enemies, and ere he could gain much ground he heard the loud tramp of hostile feet close behind. Measuring the intervening distance with a keen eye, he wheeled suddenly round, stopped short, and received the first of his pursuers on the presented point of the halberd. Just extricating the blade from the body of the falling man, Vrank turned again and resumed his flight, having gained breath by the sudden check. As he ran along, two or three bullets, discharged from heavy arquebuses, with little chance of hitting their mark, cut through the fruit-tree branches beside his path, or ploughed up the ground close to his feet. But a more imminent peril awaited him at a cross avenue high shaded with fantastic holly-bushes, the end of which he was obliged to pass in his way towards the gate, where he dimly saw a sentinel standing in an attitude of defence, in obedience to the loud cries of the chief, who warned him that the detected Kabblejaw was flying towards him. That danger Vrank quickly made up his mind to brave,

thinking little of standing a flying shot from the clumsy weapon of an agitated arquebusier; but a chill struck through him, on finding that several of his pursuers, headed by Van Hemsted, had cut him short by the holly-bush walk just mentioned, and now darted out on him with drawn rapiers and looks of vengeance.

Away sprang Vrank once more, in an oblique direction from his former line of flight; and directly towards a wall full ten feet high, bounding the alley down which he ran, with more desperate speed than before, for he saw the figures of his pursuers glancing in various directions through the shrubs, and he felt himself so closely pressed that he heard the loud panting of a man almost in his very ear, and fancied that the warm breath blew upon his neck. A thrust of a sword's blade from behind and across his shoulder, which it just grazed, was the next hint of this terribly close neighbour; and a more frightful proof was in another instant given by Vrank's cloak being seized by a powerful grasp, which checked back the wearer so suddenly that his head came violently in contact with his captor's face. This was Vrank's only chance for safety. Van Hemsted, for it was he whose young limbs, nerved by deadly hatred, had outstripped the fugitive, was for an instant stunned, and unable from the shock to gain immediate command of his weapon. Vrank felt his advantage, but would not risk it by pushing it too far. He therefore made no attempt to strike his captor, but unclasping his cloak, still held in Van Hemsted's tenacious grasp, he burst from it with such force that the latter stumbled backwards some paces, and could not recover his equilibrium till Vrank had gained full twenty yards in advance; and ere another chance of seizure was given to his pursuer, he reached the foot of the wall. A shout of triumph burst from the Hoeks, who fancied him now at the term of his flight, unknowing what he did in the bereavement of fear, and utterly in their power. But he, well trained in the active sports of the court of Burgundy, planted in the earth the blade of the halberd, which he had seized on for the purpose of aiding his escape in that way, and by a flying bound, borne upwards on the strong and supple pole, he completely cleared the wall, loosened his hold of the weapon as he disappeared over the top; and an immediate

splashing sound beyond, told that he had fallen, safely and softly, into the deep moat that flanked the garden outside.

The discomfited Hoeks, almost all heavy Hollanders, unused to this kind of exercise, gazed in open-mouthed astonishment, as a group of pantomime mummers fixes its marvelling eyes on a harlequin leap. But the blood-thirstiness of their nature soon awoke them from their surprise, and they hurried out, by every sortie of the place, to endeavour to re-capture him, whom they hoped to find half-drowned at the other side. In this, however, they were again disappointed. Vrank had safely swam across the moat, and swiftly resuming his flight, favoured by the dusk, had already gained a hiding-place of perfect security.

We must not stop in faint efforts to picture Jacqueline's delight at hearing the details of this escape; nor Van Monfoort's self-satisfaction at having been the means of saving him who was his natural enemy, but the chosen friend of his reason; nor Countess Marguerite's rage; nor the fury of Van Hemsted and his associates. The effects of all the various passions excited by the event were, with one exception, soon set aside by the more absorbing circumstance of Philip of Burgundy's near approach to Amersfort, with a large, and it was believed, an irresistible invading force. While the consequent agitation made every minor consideration forgotten, the exception alluded to was furnished by Jacqueline, whose mind seemed susceptible of no new impression after that which had so lately shaken its very frame-work. Day after day immediately following Vrank's memorable visit, the fever which she fought against gained new ground, till she sunk at last upon a sick-bed, mortified at the degrading connexion between moral and physical feeling, and loathing the weakness of nature, which bows down the strongest mind under the influence of the bodily excitement, originally caused by its own. During two or three weeks, consumed in the warlike operations now immediately acting before the walls of Amersfort, Jacqueline lay under the retarding influence of such medical ignorance as the place afforded; sometimes insensible to what passed, at others, acutely alive to events, of which she at times panted to be a sharer, and not unfrequently longed that she might become the victim.

But though Jacqueline could take no personal share in

these events, her influence was the grand mover of all. The command of the place was vested in Van Monfoort, Van Hemsted having set out with reinforcements to join his brother, who was the leader of the Hoeks already in junction with the English troops in Zealand. The brave Ludwick of Urk did not belie his reputation in the trying circumstances of his command. Devotion to his mistress was his main inspiration, and was aided well by inveterate hatred to Philip and his Kabblejaw allies. No attack was at first expected against Amersfort, which it was supposed the duke would have passed by; but his hope of seizing the place by a *coup de main*, and thus obtaining possession of Jacqueline's person, made him resolve on an attempt, which his better judgment ought to have made him avoid.

Europe had not learned in those days the grand secret of defence, which teaches that torn up and loosely-piled paving stones are better than ramparts of either brick or clay; that garret and cellar windows are as good as embrasures and casemates; and that the best mode of forcing assailants to quit a town is, in the first place, to throw wide the gates for their free entry. It is to be hoped that another century will see the demolition of fortifications altogether, and that the enormous cost of their erection and preservation will be turned to the service of the people, who now know so well how to make every house a citadel, and every street a place of victory. But though the inhabitants of Amersfort in the fifteenth century did not know the inspiration of the barricades, they had all the valour which, on so many a subsequent occasion, proved Holland to be the classic land of fortified defence, against the most desperate efforts of assault. Leyden, or Haarlem, in the following century, gave no more glorious example of resistance to Spanish tyranny, than Amersfort, on the occasion we treat of, when opposed to the despotic injustice of Philip "the good."

The grand principle of popular right now stood opposed to the pretensions of sovereign wrong; and this effective effort of the Hoeks, under Jacqueline, their chosen sovereign, is a successful instance in the long struggle between the towns of Holland and Flanders against the dukes, counts, and earls, successively invading them from the Gallic territory, a struggle which may be considered as the

most perfect type of the contest between freedom and feudality. We have anticipated in saying that Amersfort was successful. We had not done so, did the interest of our story hinge on the result, but would have gratified the excited curiosity of readers who love to linger on the details of a doubtful event. But our heroine was no actor in the stirring scene; and we must hasten over its description, to reach others in which her fate was still more deeply implicated.

Philip expected that Amersfort would have fallen easily under his attack, and it was made with all the vigour which characterised his war-like operations. The resistance was worthy of the cause defended, and the enemies opposed. No instance on record gives a higher notion of obstinate bravery. The Hollanders of those remote days were on all occasions as prone to die in defence of their domestic privileges, as they were prompt, at later epochs, to prove the value they placed on liberty, lost for a while, but gloriously reconquered, and, in all the after fluctuations their history, the mainspring of the national mind. Philip was opposed not only by the common means of resistance in all sieges, and assaults, but by every unusual effort to which determination could resort. The women of Amersfort fought on the walls, invoking the name of their idolized countess, and mingling prayers for her recovery, with imprecations on her enemies. While soldiers were combating, the clergy were supplicating; and while incense was profusely thrown up before the altars, burning oil, heated pitch, and scalding water were showered from the ramparts; so that heaven and earth were equally impressed into the service of the besieged.

The result of their efforts was complete triumph. Philip, after repeated attempts, and being frequently himself exposed to imminent peril, in personal conflicts in the very ditches of the place, was forced to give up the attempt with considerable loss, and to retire from before the walls with his whole army. Having a greater object in view, he probably abandoned this one the more readily; but he was in no instance a man so headstrong as obstinately to sacrifice his soldiers, and risk his sovereignty; far superior in that respect to his celebrated son, Charles the Rash, who was not born at the epoch of our story, but whose

mad career offers a most striking contrast to Philip's long course of success, to which this unimportant check was almost a solitary exception.

This repulse raised the hopes of the Hoeks to an extravagantly sanguine pitch; but they did not measure by a just standard Philip's capability of rising against reverse. He was resolved to wipe away his recent disgrace by an exertion of all his energies; and with skilful enterprise he immediately pushed on his army, to seek a recompense for defeat in the chance of a redeeming victory.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW year had opened, and the morning of St. Poncien's day, the 13th of January, 1426, dawned on the world.

The snow now lay thickly on the low shores of Zealand, and every river was frozen from its source to its mouth.— Winter had set in severely; and the English troops, cantoned in the Island of Schowen, were exposed to all the rigours of an inclement season, and anxiously waiting the approach of the promised enemy, which was to end their suspense, the worst of all evils to soldiers. The cottages, and fisher-huts of the coast all round the little town of Brouwershaven were occupied by Lord Fitz-walter's army. He himself had his head quarters in one of the principal houses of this insular capital; and as the scanty habitation of the neighbourhood could contain but a small portion of his followers, rude constructions of wood, cloth, and canvass, were thrown up in the most sheltered vicinity of the seashore, offering but imperfect accommodations to the poor fellows who had to brave the privations of winter, as well as the perils of war.

The most advanced post of the usual nightly bivouac, on the north-easternmost head-land of Brouwershaven, had passed a wretched fourteen hours of cold and darkness in their guard-tent. They consisted of a serjeant, two cor-

porals, and a dozen privates, sturdy Englishmen of Fitzwalter's own regiment of archers. They had passed the night as best they could, relieving, by turns, every half hour the one sentry, who stood on the outmost point of land; and in spite of their most active efforts to keep themselves warm, each in his tour of duty was almost benumbed and frozen. Those who occupied the tent were little better off than he who paced the path of beaten snow on the beach; for although huddled together round the brass chafing-pan of burning sea-coal, which stood in the middle of the tent, or occasionally rolling their cloak-wrapped forms in the straw which lay thick on the ground, still the wind pierced sharply through the canvass in every part, and the earth-damps were forced up, in defiance of even the rush mat which lay beneath the straw.

Of all the party, Serjeant Thorlby was the individual who had least repose; for the responsibility of command required his being constantly on the alert, and the veteran who had learned the perils of neglect, in several campaigns under Henry V. in France, was not satisfied with the mere slovenly discharge of his own duty, but saw closely into the performance of that of the rest. His nose was in consequence very nearly frost-bitten, and his eyes in a perpetual flood of tears, from the nipping air, which pinched the one, and made the other blink, as the serjeant held his face to the open slit of the tent, with short intervals of retreat, during many hours of the night.

"Up, corporal, for the relief!" exclaimed he, as the half-hour's chime from Brouwershaven church-steeple rang sharply through the rarified atmosphere.

"Rouse thee, Ralph Grimston!" cried the corporal; "don thy sallet, take up thy arms, and march!"

"A plague on all frosty nights and ill-stitched canvas!" muttered the soldier, as he rose from the straw, "my limbs are as cramped and gnarled with the cold as though I had sat an hour i' th' stocks at St. Magnus's Corner."

"Ah, Ralph, that had done small harm to thy accustomed limbs—they are well used to the measure of the wooden anklet-holes," observed another of the men, whose wit was keenly relished by the rest of the party, as was evinced by a loud laugh, that went far through the walls of the tent.

"Out on thee, for a scapegrace, Lovel," retorted Ralph, nimbly adjusting his head-piece, and making ready his bow and baldrick. "The mark of the beadle's whip on thy back is blushing redder than even this cold night, to hear thee speak ill of thy betters."

The laugh, ready for either side of a coarse jest, now went round at the expense of the first speaker.

"Come, my lads, come!" said the authoritative voice of Serjeant Thorsby, "'tis no time now for jibes and jeers, when Burgundy is off the coast, and every Briton should keep ill words and hard blows for the common foe. Out with the relief; the sentry strikes his dagger on his brigandine to mark the end of his time of watch."

"Ralph Grimston, out for the relief!" repeated the corporal, and then left the tent with the soldier who was next for duty.

"What chime has just tolled," asked another, rubbing his drowsy eyes, which had been long ineffectually striving to close in sleep.

"'Tis seven o'clock, and the morn is breaking over the sea yonder," replied the second corporal, who had stood the last two hours' watch.

"Let us all up, then, and prepare for the sunrise muster," said Sergeant Thorsby.

"Up, then, up with the sun, brave boys! as the old catch has it," exclaimed one of the soldiers, a young fellow, who actively rose from the log on which he had laboured for an uneasy doze, and immediately began to sort and choose among the accoutrements of the whole guard those which belonged to himself.

Ay, this is my hufkyn and mawle," said he, "but here, Robert Moggs, is thy pike; and harkye! Stephen Bracton, thy dagger hangs with Paul Hetherstone's burgonet. Make clear my masters, and each man his own!"

"Thou'rt a brisk and a deft lad, Walter Bassett. I'll warrant thou'lt bear a serjeant's short staff ere the war be over," exclaimed old Thorsby in an encouraging tone.

"I bid for a pair of gilt spurs, serjeant, and will not stop for less," said the young man.

"Well done, Walter," shouted one of his comrades with a sneer, "proud words, for a raw boy, who has never seen

the flight of shaft or bolt, or heard the sound of saker or falconet, in anger."

"Why, what wouldst thou mean by that mouth-twisting grin, thou particular fellow?" retorted Walter, "may not ambition speak in a boy, because 'tis dumb in thy beard-covered jaws? Were every archer as dull as thee, slow Sefton, Duke Philip's billmen might snatch the bows from our hands and the horns from our belts, ere we could shoot a shaft for the sake of merry England."

"Remember, Walter," said another of the men, "that Sefton began his service in the cross-bow company; and they are all slowgoers in virtue of their base weapon."

"I'll tell ye, comrades," said Sefton, "for all ye may say against the cross-bow, it is a noble instrument of war, and it will hold its place in old England's ranks long after these long bows of ours are cast into disuse. Show me the best among them, that can carry a shaft point-blank to its mark, like a Latch or a Prod, either of steel, horn, or wood, whether pulled by goat's foot or moulinet! What signifies the arrow which we shoot shuffling by chance through the wind, compared to an iron quarrel, a flint-stone, or leaden bullet, sent point-blank from a good cross-bow at an object sixty yards off? No; no, my lads; give me brave Coeur de Lion's good old weapon, and beshrew the day that saw me drafted into the archer's guard!"

"That's a sorry compliment to thy comrades, Sefton," exclaimed a new speaker, "and if thou hadst nothing worse to confess at thy yule-tide shrift, Sir Anthony, the curate had an easy job on it."

"Nay, I meant not my comrades, but my craft," replied Sefton. "I have stood too many a tough pull by thy side, good friend, to cast a reflection of unkindness on thee or thy like."

"Good will, good will and fair words, brothers," exclaimed the serjeant, always on the watch to keep up a cordial tone among his men. "We must not lean hard on Sefton, though he has wielded the weapon which we justly despise, and which caused King Richard the death he so well deserved for so devilish an invention. But, let no man decry the long bow, which can send three goose-quilled arrows faster and farther than the other can discharge one

quarrel, though it be feathered with wood or brass. But if the long bow beats all other weapons, as, grace be to God! we have proved at Agincourt and elsewhere, yet remember, lads, that the cross bow is all to nought before the arquebuss for speed or surety."

"Ay, serjeant, you say well," cried Sefton, elated at this tribute paid to his favourite weapon; "I knew a man of our corps, Ralph Mugglesford by name, whose widow now keeps the Cup and Tun anent the White Friar's hospital in Fleet Street, that in the skirmishes before Rouen killed and hurt more Frenchmen with his cross bow than any six harquebusiers during the whole siege. And true it is as that I'm a breathing man, our noble King Henry, whom God pardon, whose like we may never look on—"

The forced listeners to this preamble were terrified at the prospect of one of "slow Sefton's" oft-told stories; and young Bassett, tipping the wink to the others of the group, said in his usual pert way—

"I'll tell you what it is, Sefton, as sure as my father's a mercer in East-cheap, and may dog's-wain or hopharlot be my coarse covering for ever, but I know that long story of thine about the kith and kin of the Mugglesfords, as well as my dagger knows my baldrick. Canst not tell us something new, old boy? or give us a trick of the Italian tergitour's mummary, or a morris-dancer's feat in the frosty air? Or shall I give thee in Master Chaucer's rhymes a true picture of a gallant archer? What say ye, comrades? you know, I learned reading at Gaffer Bumford's grammar-school!"

"Thou'rt a pert cockerel, the whole archer's company knows that," said Sefton, mortified at being cut short in his story, and more so at the merriment excited by the speech of his interrupter.

"Recite, recite!" exclaimed all the others of the party. "The long bows for ever! Hurra for the jolly archers!" and Basset thus called on, put himself into a theatrical attitude, and slapping Sefton familiarly on the shoulder, he spouted forth—

"And he was cladde, in cote and hode of grene,
A shefe of peacocke's arwes, bryghte and clene,
Under his belt he bore ful thriftily;
Wel couthe he dresse his takel yewmanly:

His armes drouped not with fetheres lowe,
 And in his hond he bore a mighty bowe.
 A not-hed hadde he, with broune visage,
 Of wood-craft couth he wel al the usage.
 Upon his arme he had a gai bracer,
 And by his side a sworde and a bokelir.
 And on the other side a gai daggere,
 Harneised wel and sharpe as point of spere.
 A Christophere on his breste of silken shene,
 An horne he bare, the baudrike was of grene."

And there, my brave lads, is the picture of a right joyous and jolly gentleman archer, like my worthy gossip Sefton here, or his true friend Walter Bassett. Come, give me thy hand, old boy—we're brother bowmen and true Britons together, in a strange land, and an ugly quarrel—give me thy hand, old Surefoot!"

"Ay, ay, Sefton! no malice!" said Serjeant Thorlsby. "Let's all join hands in a round of brotherhood. Who knows how soon the mounseers and mynheers will come to break our peace!"

"Ay, and our pates," said Basset with a laugh; and the whole group joined hands and danced round the fire, in a burst of that gloomy gayety, which is, on like occasions, so awful a forerunner to suffering and slaughter.

"Halloa, halloa! Hast seen the ghost?" cried two or three of the party to the corporal, now returned to the tent with the sentry he had relieved, as they put their frost blown faces in and stared at the mad-cap circle, capering round, while their harness and various weapons clanked an accompaniment to their hoarse voices.

"A ghost!" said the corporal, shivering as he came in; "no, i'troth, but I've seen a signal of what may make ghosts of some of us!"

There was an air of seriousness in these words, which struck with a solemn effect on the lately giddy seeming group. The rude gambols ceased, and each man listened for the sequel of the corporal's announcement.

"Ay, comrades, ye may stop dancing, and take to praying, for the tar barrel at Splashwater head is just a-blaze, to tell that the enemy's fleet's coming up the channel."

"Ha, ha!" cried the serjeant, cheering up at the news of the enemy's approach, like an old charger at the trum-

pet's sound, "now then to business, gallant hearts! Turn out to the morning muster—the sun will soon shine forth to see your array. But first let me read you the noble Lord Fitz-walter's orders, which, though each man knows by heart, it is nathless my duty to repeat each morning."

The serjeant, after some preparations, read in sonorous accents the following regimental standing orders—

"Let captain and standing officers of the archers or Longbow's company, see that their soldiers, according to their draught and strength, have good bows, wel rocked, wel strynged, every stryngge whippe in their rocke, and in the myddes rubbed with wax, braser, and shutting-glove; sum spare strynges trymed as aforesaid; everie man one shefe of arrows, with a leather case, gode against rayne, and in the same fower and twentie arrows, whereof eight should be lighte to galle and astryne the enemye with the hailshot of light arrows, before they shall cum within the range of harquebuss shot. Let everie man have a brigandine or cote of plate, a skul or hufkyn, a mawle of led, five foot in length, a pike, the same hangynge by his girdle with a hooke and a dagger. Being thus furnished, let them, by musters, marche, shoote and retyre—keeping their faces upon the enemye. Sum tyme putte them into great nowmbers as to battell apperteyneth, and thus use them often tymes practised till they be perfecte, for those men in battell ne skirmish can not be spared. And so none other weapon may be compaired with the same noble weapon."

"Bear that in mind, Sefton, 'tis the general's own word," said Serjeant Thorlsby, closing his parchment-covered book, in which this order was written as we have given it to our readers, only altered here and there by somewhat modernizing the spelling and omitting a few words now quite obsolete. The well-disciplined archers had listened with the most profound attention to the reading of this document, though they could repeat every word of it, like their pater-noster. When the serjeant had finished, however, the clatter of their preparations for parade instantly re-commenced; but one of them called out:—

"Good serjeant, the sun is not yet above the sea. Let's not put out our noses till we can warm them at his red-hot

furnace. And meantime, as we have neither sack nor ale on this comfortless beach to make our blood stir quicker, let's have a bout of a chorus to keep out the cold air. What say ye, gallants?"

"A song, a song!" cried several.

"Come, Bassett," said one, "thou art pitch-pipe to the company—up with a stave. Thy clear voice is inherited from thy old uncle, the snuffing sub-chanter of St. Mary's Axe. Give us somewhat appropriate, 'Summer is y comynge,' 'Blows the red rose in the brae,' 'Nay my nay, nay my nay,' or some such soft ditty, as thou wert accustomed to warble to little Cicely of the White Hart in Southwark, when ye wandered together in Lord Cobham's park at Charing. Come, lad, chime it up, chime it up! Thou'rt able to chime it up from prick song."

"That may be, Hetherston," replied Bassett, "but ratsbane be my portion if I am able to sing a stance now, that I ever sung to Cicely. No, no, I must not think of her! But we must not be faint-hearted neither, brave boys! By the bones of King Sebba, this is no time for sad thoughts! so I'll give ye a goodly Hunt's up, or Wasfail roundel, to mind ye of dear England, and put new-life into your frost-nipped nerves."

"Hearken, hearken! cease clattering and clinking! Hist for the roundel!" said several voices together, each helping to keep up the clamour that all wanted to stop.

"But, I say, bully Bassett," exclaimed the serjeant, "canst thou not, brave boy, give us one of thy off-hand roundels? something apt and pat—wherewithal to make us laugh in the wind's teeth this chattering morn? Try thy hand at an extempore—rouse up thy ready rhymes!"

"Well, well, I'll do my best," said Bassett, "though i'fegs, comrades, when the heart's full of home and old times, the tongue can scarce run glibly in the frolic of extempore verse. But, I'll give something, for better or worse, to the tune of—let's see—'The hounds are in the brake, boys,'—'Tis a three-man's song—some of ye know the air and must join me as I go on!"

"I know it," said one.

"Ay, ay, lad, we'll chime in," cried another.

"Very well, very well! and now mind ye gossips, let

no one be angry with a joke this morn, which may hear the bell toll for many of us—and now, boys, repeat after me—I'll begin with a chorus."

The young and not over-refined improvisator, after a short pause, and with little hesitation, then sang the following stanzas, duly accompanied by his comrades, who formed the subject of his rude rhymes, their loud bursts of laughter telling at every strophe how resolved they were (and how easy) to be pleased.

"Heigh for a nonny, ho for a nonny!
Madge is in the dale;
And the crispy snow, as her footsteps go
To gather a branch of the misletoe,
Might tell, if it would, a tale!

"The serjeant's nose look'd blue, boys,
Ere chanticleer had crew, boys;
Or the belfry's chime
Had warned old time
How cold the north wind blew, boys.

CHORUS.—Heigh for a nonny, &c.

"Jack Sefton's slow and slack, boys,
Bob Moggs is awry in the back, boys,
And Bracton's lips,
When his ale he sips,
Like true lovers' kisses smack, boys.

CHORUS.—Heigh for a nonny, &c.

"Paul Hetherston throws his friends, boys,
Like his arms at odds and ends, boys,
And Corporal Crump,
With his head all a-lump,
Has his hose and his ways to mend, boys.

CHORUS.—Heigh for a nonny, &c.

"Ralph Grimstone, who walks the watch, boys,
On his cheek has a frost-bitten blotch, boys,
And alack's the day!
When I've said my say,
Wat Bassett's at best a botch, boys.

"Heigh for a nonny, ho for a nonny!
Madge is in the dale,
And the crispy snow, as her footsteps go
To gather a branch of the misletoe,
Might tell, if it would, a tale."

"Enough, enough, comrades! by St. George I'm sick of my own foolery! God speed it with poor Cecily this cold morning! mayhap she saw a winding-sheet in the candle last night, or dreams of a bloody field this minute. Serjeant, I can sing no more,—I had rather make ready for fighting."

"Out then, lads! out on the beach for parade! the sun is up, and 'fore Heaven! there sounds the morning falconet."

At these words the party hurried from the tent.—Young Bassett stopped for a moment or two beside slow Sefton, who was sure to linger after the rest.

"Tell me, Sefton," said the former, "what is your periapt made of?"

"Why of what, if there's truth in wizard, refreshes the heart and corroborates the whole body, as well as keeps off harms either of steel or lead. It's made of pounded Bezoar's stone and the confection of Alkermes."

"And mine," said Bassett, "is pure St. John's-wort, picked by Cecily's own fingers, on a Friday, in full moon last July, that was in the hour of Jupiter, when it came into effectual operation. Mother Maxton, of St. George's Fields, vouched, that of all amulets it most drives away fantastical spirits. Yet I don't know how it is, but something hangs on my heart, Sefton!"

"Tut, tut! the trumpet's flourish and the cannon's roar will drive that away, Walter!"

"I hope so! But at any rate, I'll keep up a good countenance," said Bassett, leaving the tent with his comrade.

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE the sun had fairly shown his blood-red disk through the thick haze that hung over the horizon, not only the little circle of the advanced postguard, but Lord Fitz-walter himself, and great part of his army were out of their quarters, and mustering in all speed to oppose the enemy, whose coming was announced by a chain of watch-fires, now blazing along the coast. Drums and trumpets sounded the gay reveillé through the narrow streets of Brouwershaven, and down the lines of cantonment, occupied by the English and their ready allies the Hoeks. Nobody was taken by surprise. The approach of the Burgundian forces had been long expected and longed for, by troops tired of inaction, and impatient to follow up the glorious example set by the people of Amersfort. Within an hour, therefore, of the first alarm, full ten thousand warriors, well prepared and ardent for the shock, were formed in battle-array in the raw mists of this memorable morning.

The picture presented by the troops, as they occupied their various stations in the field, where every platoon knew its place, and every squadron had already practised its manœuvres, was composed of many animating, yet melancholy combinations. The frosty and snow-covered earth does not offer the natural complexion of a battle-field. Winter is not the fitting season for war. The green-sward on a spring day seems the appropriate stage for the conflicts of armies. The mind sympathizes freely in the stirring excitement of a contest in such a scene, when valour rises gayly in the young heart, as the lark mounts singing to Heaven's vault. But a chill creeps over the mind, which imagines the crash of battalions on a cold and cheerless plain, where the hard earth repulses the tread of men and the tramp of horses, and the snow lies in ready heaps, to form winding-sheets for the gallant victims, whose blood is to discolour its wreaths. A fight on such a stage tells that ambition has no repose, and that tyranny refuses a respite even to the

decaying elements of nature. All is out of place, forced and disfiguring; and the heart sickens at the scene.

But the generous Fitz-walter and his followers had no room for notions like this. Battle was their element, and it never came out of place. They now felt themselves standing up, the champions of suffering right, in the person of a brave and beautiful woman; and all seasons were alike, which allowed them to quench their hot valour in the troubled waters of war. The Hoeks, on their parts, would, if possible, have reversed the whole order of nature, and have turned winter to summer, and night to day, and found all good, if they could be so brought into closer and more frequent contact with their detested enemies. The spirit of the little allied army may be therefore understood.

The order of battle was, according to the well-considered plan of the experienced Fitz-walter, formed in lines. The first being arranged close to the beach, was composed of the English troops; a post which they have always been sure to occupy in every continental contest, whether in north or south, in the swamps of Holland, or on the hills of Spain, from the battle of Brouwershaven, to that of Waterloo. The appearance of the English battalions stretching along the sea-shore, was infinitely more striking than could be imagined now, from the observance of a modern brigade, in its more regular, but far less picturesque attire and equipment. The most remarkable were the archer's companies, in all about one thousand men, part of the very *élite* of the English military force. Geoffrey Chaucer's lines, quoted in the last chapter, give a lively picture of an individual soldier of this celebrated corps. Several hundreds so accoutred, such parts of their body as were not covered by their shirt of mail, decked in a close-fitting suit of green, with shining arms and martial air, must have formed a most imposing spectacle. The archers were not only picked men for good conduct and fine appearance, but were of a better order of beings than those composing the ordinary bulk of the army. They were none of the depraved class of "masterlesse menne," or "roysterling swash-bucklers," but chiefly citizens of London, sons of people of substance and good connexions, for it required both money and interest to procure admission into a branch of the service, forming so capital a provision for a soldier.

The privates of this corps were indeed apparently overpaid. They had sixpence a day, besides rations when on service, a sum fully equal to five shillings at the present times. And it may be supposed that this high rate of income ensured a correspondent tone and spirit, which rendered the English archers a body of the finest troops in Europe.

Besides these, there were now drawn out for action, bill-men, pike-men, and lancers, or men-at-arms, which last were fenced in complete steel from head to foot, and being of the strongest and largest men, were considered the most important portion of the army. Several pieces of cannon were attached to Lord Fitz-walter's force, of various denominations; some of the unwieldy size common to those early days of artillery service, others of more moderate proportions; from such large pieces as that Flemish gun described by Froissart, and those of later date by Monstrelet, the first of which made such a noise on being discharged, "that one would have thought that all the devils in hell had a share in it," down to the light culverins, each carried by two men, and fired off from a rest planted in the ground, a kind of diminutive field-piece, or over-grown blunderbuss.

Fitz-walter had little or no cavalry with him on this occasion. The Hoeks, of whom Van Hemsted had the chief command, were not quite deficient in this important army, some squadrons of which flanked the second line of the army composed of the good men of Holland and Zeeland. The reserve did not consist of the best troops, as a different system of tactics would prudently point out, (for Fitz-walter's wish to follow such was frustrated by the forward emulation of the combatants,) but of fishermen and peasants quite undisciplined and indifferently armed. But altogether, the mass skilfully drawn up, and anxious to engage, with their various standards unfurled, and their warlike instruments sounding, showed a formidable array to receive the far more numerous foe, who now prepared to make a long day's work of havoc.

The squadrons of various kinds of craft, containing Duke Philip's army, came rapidly in sight, each ship or boat successively anchoring in a close offing, and soon disgorging its living cargo of fighting men. The advanced

guard consisted of the Dutch and Zealand contingents of United Kabblejaws, led on by Floris Van Borselen. The flat-bottomed open boats, in which they were embarked, were pulled by the sturdy rowers close up towards the shore, indifferent to the heavy stone bullets discharged at them from the hostile pieces of ordinance planted on the flanks of the British line. As the assailants took to the smaller boats attached to the transport vessels, and came paddling on in the shallow water, a shower, or, (in the words of Lord Fitz-walter's order of the day,) "a hail-shot of light arrows" was poured upon them from a thousand strings, that twanged at the given word in simultaneous discharge.

The attacking party was not slack in returning this and the succeeding volleys, from arquebuss, cross-bow, and long-bow, while the large vessels, moored behind, to cover the landing, sent their missiles from the huge Flemish pieces before alluded to, in as rapid succession as was compatible with the then imperfect state of the science of gunnery.

In the very foremost of the Kabblejaw boats two figures were remarkable, the one for manly and youthful beauty, with an air of intrepid decision; the other for a wildly terrible appearance, in dress, gesture, and accoutrement. The first was clad in the light blue costume of the Eversdyke fiefs, with a silver placquet bound on the arm, the red cross of St. Andrew embroidered on his breast, a drawn rapier in his right hand, and the green banner of the Borselens in his left. The second, whose wolf-skin short mantle concealed neither limbs nor body, was armed with the tremendous weapon, which had made the Zeven-volden ring, with the sound of the orox's death-blow. We need scarcely specify the names of Vrank and Oost to the reader, whose memory can go back to that early scene.

Lord Fitz-walter, who rode along the English line, encouraging his men by all the inducements dear to soldiers, soon distinguished Vrank, as he came closer in towards land, and sprang from his boat knee-deep in the sea, forming his father's vassals into order of attack.

"Brave followers!" cried the English general, "as ye value my fame and honour, spare that knight in the silver-

trimmed blue mandilion, who carries the green flag. I have marked him for my own prey—he bears my glove in his cap !”

This appeal to their keen sense of chivalry was a sacred panoply for Vrank's safety. Volley after volley was discharged by the English archers, and many a barb found a sheath in Kabblejaw hearts ; but all seemed to fly wide of the young warrior, who stood first and foremost in the fight. Floris Van Borselen was not far behind his son.—He jumped into the sea, with all the energy, if not quite the activity of youth, as soon as his boat touched the ground, and he hurried forwards, as near as possible to the front of the line.

“On, Kabblejaws ! On, men of Eversdyck !” shouted he, and successive words of encouragement burst from him, scarcely audible amid the roar of the cannon, the splash of the mailed-men in the surf, and the various war-cries of the different communes composing the Kabblejaw contingents. An irregular line, two or three deep, was soon formed, and a charge ere long took place at Van Borselen's command, the assailants driving before them a frothcrested wave, which rolled far up the strand, and into the very lines of the English archers. These, as soon as the hostile movement commenced, practised the manœuvre then so peculiarly their own, of letting the front rank drop down on one knee, behind the high stakes, as a rest for better aim-taking. The centre rank stood still, and the rear-rank men, each stepping a pace to the right, they all at once pulled their bow-strings, furnished with the heaviest peacock-feathered shafts ; and while those most behind shot through the intervals of those immediately before them, both flights of arrows passed clear over the heads of the front rank, and the combined volley formed a cloud of winged weapons, and threw a deep shadow on the sea as it went whizzingly along.

Many a bold Kabblejaw sunk into the wayes from the effect of this terrible discharge, which was repeated again and again before the advancing line of pikemen could gain the dry land. They were galled, stunned, and almost stupefied by these reiterated assaults. But the unflinching valour of the Borselens, and the other leading Kabblejaws who escaped unhurt preserved their followers from falter-

ing, and the Flemish lancers, who formed the second line of attack, now taking to their boats, gave new courage to the advanced guard, which might well have wavered without any imputation, under the fearful effects of such a reception.

"They fly, they fly!" halloed Floris Van Borselen, already hoarse from vociferating to his troops; "those proud English, those famous archers fly before us!"

A loud cheer answered the fallacious information of the deceived chieftain; and he and his men rushed on to the fatal space left clear by the retreating English, who purposely fell back, taking good care, however, according to the commands already quoted, to "marche, shoote, and re-tyre—keepynge their faces on the enemie." As soon as the Kabblejaws came on shore, in all the confusion of delusive success, the flanks of the English line fell back at right angles with the centre of the line which stood still, and at that moment the cavalry of the Hoeks, which had already practised the manœuvre, charged fiercely on each side of their disorderly foes, while the archers contrived to pour in unsparingly their cloth-yard shafts. But far from causing a panic among the Kabblejaws, the sight of their hated countrymen inflamed them to desperation.

"Grace to St. Poncien, this blessed day! St. Peter and St. Paul be praised!" cried old Borselen; "they come, they come! Now, brave Kabblejaws, as you love your native land, as ye hate the Hoeks, be firm and bold! Up lances! ready cross-bows!—steady gunsmen!—face right and left!—form two squares back to back!—Leave the English unharmed, and turn every eye, every hand, and every weapon against the odious Hoeks!"

These orders were quickly obeyed, with an attention to discipline, not common in the conflicts of civil war. The two Borselens stood together in the centre of the right hand square. Uterken commanded the other. The hostile squadrons which galloped on to the attack, were respectively headed by the Van Hemsted brothers. Zheger, the eldest, and the chief in command, soon broke the square, scarcely formed in time to resist his impetuous charge. The ill-fated Kabblejaws composing it were cut down without mercy, or driven back into the sea, where some few were rescued by the advancing Flemish line.

The assailants of the right hand square were not so fortunate. At the very first onset, young Hemsted, who rode furiously forward on recognising Vrank Van Borselen, was slain by a random shot from an arquebuss, before he could reach the object that so particularly inflamed his fury. His squadron, seeing their leader fall, hesitated, which is tantamount in such a case to repulse; and being fired on skilfully from some of the boats, which covered the landing of the Kabblejaws, they broke and fled. Floris Van Borselen promptly took advantage of this circumstance, and advancing his troops in a close column, he gained possession of a rudely entrenched church-yard, close to Brouwershaven, before any effectual opposition could be made by the English, who were now fully engaged with the Flemish reinforcements.

The infantry of the Hoeks, however, began an almost immediate movement, in order to surround Van Borselen in his position; and just then one of those instances occurred, so unheard of in modern conflicts, but common to the wars of chivalry. Lord Fitz-walter, who had marked every movement that had taken place from the commencement of the action now quitted the station which seemed peculiarly his own, and leaving the English troops under the command of the knight next in rank to himself, he rode towards Van Borselen's position, accompanied only by one of his squires, and a soldier who held a white flag at the end of his lance.

At this signal of truce, the Kabblejaws stood firm, but ceased every hostile discharge; while old Floris grimly smiled at those around him, and mocked at the notion of the English general coming forward with a summons for surrender. But Vrank took a keener and more correct view of Fitz-walter's motives; and he requested his father's leave to advance and enter on the parley. The permission granted, Vrank stepped forward, and was quickly accosted by the haughty lord.

"Sir Knight," said he, "we know each other; and having a private quarrel to settle, I propose for awhile a truce on this isolated part of the battle-field, to allow of its adjustment."

"What does he say?" asked Floris, who did not understand the French Language, in which Fitz-walter spoke.

"He proposed that he and I should fight in single combat, hand to hand," said Vrank.

"So, so! By St. Peter, and St. Paul, then, thou shalt do it! A Borselen never yet received a challenge that was not accepted, nor often fought a battle that was not won. Thou must teach this insolent Englishman, Vrank, of what stuff a Zealander and a Kabblejaw is made!"

"What are the words of the old knight?" demanded Fitz-walter, who was totally unacquainted with Dutch.

"My father says," replied Vrank, "that he is proud to see a Zealand gentleman measure weapons with an English lord."

"Sir Knight, I honour you for your courtesy," exclaimed the Englishman, bowing to Heer Borselen.

"What does the cringing Saxon mutter about, and mean by saluting me?" inquired the latter of his son.

"Nothing, nothing, Sir! but the usual forms of civilised chivalry," said Vrank, dissatisfied at his father's coarseness.

"So! so! and 'tis such popinjay tricks that I despise and hate," returned Floris; but Vrank put an end to all ill-timed sarcasms, by advancing close to Fitz-walter, and fixing himself in an attitude of defence. His antagonist lost no time in dismounting from his horse, which he gave to the keeping of his attendant, and in a moment more the hostile rapiers were crossed; while the anxious, but tried Kabblejaws, who looked on, were not sorry to gain this respite from their fatigues.

"One question, my Lord Fitz-walter," said Vrank, for I know you now as well by name as person. I ask you, on the faith and by the courtesy of knighthood, whose favour is that you bear in your casque, and which I have sworn to dye in your heart's blood?"

"In courtesy I answer, it is that of your liege sovereign, the Countess Jacqueline of Holland and Hainault, whose cause I am here in arms to maintain, against you and all other false traitors to her right and virtues."

"What does he say now?" anxiously asked old Floris, who stood close to his son. But Frank would not repeat the real phrase, and had no heart to invent another.—"God! am I then opposed to her chosen knight—to her lover? He could not violate the truth of chivalry and tell

a lie—and she, in default and defiance of honour, has done so! Why is not my arm strengthened instead of palsied? I cannot fight against her champion here, any more than against herself at Amersfort,” thought Vrank, while he stood for a moment inactive. But the rapid cut and thrust movements of Fitz-walter rousing his natural courage, drove all sentimental subtleties from his mind, and he soon recovered the consciousness of the part he played, and of the observers before whom he acted. Few men understood the management of his weapons better than Vrank; none had more self-command. So that Fitz-walter, with all his valour and skill and inspiration of a glorious cause, had nevertheless now found his match. It was indeed evident even to himself, that had Vrank been vindictively inclined, he might more than once have taken him at advantage; and Fitz-walter’s fury was considerably appeased by the conviction. The contest, therefore, after the few opening passages, became less a passionate struggle than a brisk display of science. Yet a couple of slight wounds were exchanged. Fitz-walter being hurt in the cheek, and Vrank having received his adversary’s point in the thigh. Both bled; and the natural taint of savagery which lurks below the best disposition, was rising high in both the champions at sight of their own blood, and symptoms were shown by each of increasing violence, which would infallibly have given a more desperate character to their contest. But just then an English officer came galloping at full speed across the plain that intervened between the church-yard and the beach, where the battle was now raging more fiercely than before.

“Lord Fitz-walter! General! cease fighting. Sheathe your rapier, and retire!” cried he; and while the fiery combatants turned round at the sound of this unwelcome summons, these disappointing words fell on his ear.

“Cease fighting, in recordance with your knightly pledge. Duke Philip himself is in sight, and about to take the field.”

“Cursed and ill-starred duke!” exclaimed Fitz-walter, dashing his weapon on the earth; “ever a moment too soon to rob me of my revenge and thwart my glory!—’Twas thus in the battle of Bauge he made me captive, and wrung as the hard condition of my freedom the pledge

that I should never fight again where he was in person in the field. Let this explanation suffice, Sir Francon, for my abandonment of this contest, which, with the grace of my Lord St. George, I shall be on the first opportunity proud and happy to renew."

"Why, what is all this, Vrank?—explain it—and quick, my boy—your wound bleeds freely," said the father, who was well pleased at the short explanation given him in reply, and at seeing his son's dangerous antagonist mount his horse. After an exchange of some courteous words on the subject of their mutual hurt, Fitz-walter rode slowly from the scene of action, accompanied by his squire, until he reached a rather elevated portion of ground, whence he could witness, without mixing in, the continuance of the fight. He despatched the officer back to Van Hemsted, with information of his having abandoned the command, which now devolved on that brave but inexperienced Zealander, who was thus left to cope against the military talent of Philip and his generals, forming a phalanx of fearful odds against the cause of Jacqueline, and the devoted thousands now doomed to participate in its fate.

The low-decked carrack which bore the Duke of Burgundy and his splendid suite had now been rowed close in towards the shore; and the hostile shot discharged from it, justified the report made by the English captain of Philip's actual share in the action. But such a distant co-operation did not suit his temperament. Excited by the scene, and anxious to strike some blow to decide the battle, which, up to that moment, was still very doubtful, the duke was in the act of proclaiming to those around him his resolution to betake himself to the shore, when a somewhat appalling apparition presented itself, clambering up the side of the vessel. It was Oost the dyke-digger who, accustomed to the rough waves of the Friesland coasts, and indifferent to peril or hardship, whether by land or water, had volunteered to swim to Philip's vessel, with a pressing request for assistance from Floris Van Borselen, who, on Fitz-walter's retreat, was threatened with imminent risk from the whole second line of the allied army composed of the Zealand Hoeks, advancing against him in overwhelming numbers, and threatening to cut him off from all chance of escape.

Oost had come on his mission entirely unarmed but with his hunting-knife, which was stuck in his girdle; but when he rose from the sea, his wolf-skin mantle dripping, and his huge limbs and body drenched, he looked an awful specimen of amphibious ferocity. The very sailors who had marked him, as he swam towards the vessel, and to whom he shouted his name and business as he neared it, shrank back as he gained the decks and made way for his approach to the official personages of the duke's suite. His demand to speak with Philip in person was peremptory; and there was something not to be resisted in the wild singularity of the ambassador, which would have secured him an audience even at a time and station of more formality.

As Oost advanced, his lynx-eyed glance soon selected him who was the sovereign, amid the numerous band of courtiers by whom he was encircled. But the free Frison at the same time distinguished another person, whom he at once recollected, although clad in a different guise from that in which he had once before seen him. This was a rather corpulent individual, looking painfully nervous and very blue, from the united effect of the frost and the firing, in a curious mixture of clerical and warlike habiliment, a cuirass on his breast, casque on head, yet a richly worked mantle of purple silk over his shoulders, of the pattern of a priest's vestment, a crosier in one hand, and a beautifully ornamented and gold clasped breviary in the other. Oost at once recognised this type of the church militant as the person who had wheedled and overpersuaded him to resign his orox-horn in the Zevenvolden, and whom our readers will not refuse to acknowledge as Bishop Zweder Van Culembourg, although the chapter of Utrecht had some weeks before despoiled him of that title, and driven him out to deprecate the wrath and implore the forgiveness of the Duke of Burgundy.

We must not now pause to trace the windings of selfishness, meanness, and poltroonery, which had for some weeks previously influenced Zweder Van Culembourg. Pressed by his own fears and doubts on the one hand, and by the hostility of Rudolf Van Diepenholt's friends in the chapter and city of Utrecht on the other, he had been, from the very first day we introduced him to our readers, playing

the double game so natural to such a mind. It has been seen how he stood neutral even during the successes of Jacqueline and the Hoeks; his influence thrown boldly into the scale might have produced decisive results in their favour and in his own. But the temporizing cunning of his nature would never allow of his making up his mind. When, however, his domestic disputes took a direct tendency unfavourable to himself, he did not hesitate to abandon others; and it was then he wrote to Philip the letter which told him the secrets of the Zevenvolden conference, as far as Jacqueline and Gloucester were implicated, but threw the excuse of double perfidy on the part he had himself acted, representing it as assumed for the purpose of ensnaring his associates, and handing them over to Philip's vengeance. Even after this he strictly allowed himself the reservation of actually joining Philip only in case of his evident preponderance of power; and it was not finally until he heard of Gloucester's marriage and his abandonment of Jacqueline, and that the people of Utrecht drove him from his archiepiscopal seat, that he sought the head-quarters of the invading, and as something whispered him, the invincible usurper. The rarely failing acuteness of the sordid was in this instance unfortunately confirmed. The battle now fighting was desperately decisive of the conflict; and we hasten to tell its lamentable result.

When Oost, admitted close to Philip, uttered in brief phrase some sentences expressive of Van Borselen's perilous situation, and his demand for succour, the duke not versed in the low German idiom, in which the envoy spoke, turned for information to Zweder Van Culembourg; and when the latter translated the message, his teeth chattering the while under the double influence before alluded to, Philip cast a look full of meaning on another person who stood as close to him on one side, as Zweder did on the other. This individual was William Le Begue, whose cool and calculating head furnished him with reasoning sufficient to supply any constitutional defect in courage. He had therefore stood unflinchingly close to Philip in more than one perilous situation during the short campaign; and he was beside him now, to take advantage of whatever might turn up for his own purposes, while ostensibly the disinterested counsellor of his sovereign. Bishops

and ministers of our times have happily a dispensation from such hazardous service, not being called on to pray for, or confer with their liege lord in the very battle field. But such was the habit of the days of yore.

To the expressive look cast by Philip, on William Le Begue, the latter replied by a shrug of the shoulders, and a negative shake of the head, which spoke, unfortunately for him, a plain refusal to Borselen's demand. Philip in his turn looked a remonstrance; and after a few words of consultation with his minister he hastened to the vessel's landward side, and left the latter to explain, through Zweder's interpretation, the reply which Oost was to carry back. Zweder accordingly translated it to him, as literally as his state of feeling allowed, but its import was plain—that there were no reinforcements to spare, and that the Borselens were to defend their position to the last.

"And this is the answer to my noble chieftain, Floris of Eversdyke—to the husband of Bona of Bolstock, the fair flower of Friesland nobleness! and so he and his son, the bright-haired youth of the valley of Ulst, who has suckled the dam of my own child, they are both—father and son—doomed to perish, sacrificed by the lordly wielder of ten thousand spears!"

"My very good, and most considerably gentle friend, my worthy Oost, allow me to go down below to pray for the bodies of the warriors who still fight, and the souls of those who have fallen or may fall; these stone bullets which sing so unmelodiously through the air are marvelously discomfoting. Do, worthy, amiable Oost, loosen thy hold of my mantle, and betake thee once more to the waters!"

As Zweder thus imploringly addressed the dyke-digger, he vainly strove to disengage himself from his grasp. When he ceased speaking, the latter looked at him with a savage scowl, but which was a glance of pure kindness compared to what Oost *could* dart from his terrible eyes.

"As for thee, poor frightened wretch," said he, "who tremblest in my grasp as the leveret under the paw of the hound, or the sheep in the eagle's fangs, thou hast nought to fear from my revenge. Thou art the mere tongue that speaks the word of doom to the brave."

"Thank you, thank you, kind fellow—pray let me re-

tire!" muttered Zweder, with wriggling efforts to escape towards the descent to the ship-cabin; but Oost gave his arm a squeeze, which told him his time of escape was not yet come.

"Silence thy babbling voice, and speak only in answer at my bidding," growled he, close into Zweder's ear; "and tell me, in short phrase, who is he, yon white-headed, pale-cheeked, cold-hearted old man, who has sounded like the raven's voice the death-sentence of the brave."

"Oh! that, my sweet friend, is William le Begue, Lord of Ligny, chief governor to John, Duke of Brabant, and Prime Minister to His Highness, the Puissant Philip, Duke of Burgundy—may I now retire to prayer, good Oost?"

"Away with ye!" said Oost, disdainfully loosening his hold. "Thou art safe—but by the gods of Friesland, and the saints of her altars, you, William Le Begue, and your master, Philip, shall pay dear for the harm that falls on him you have forsaken!"

With these words the dyke-digger strode along the deck, no one having had leisure to observe the *tete-a-tete* between him and the ex-bishop. As he passed by William le Begue, he stopped for a moment full before him, and gazed just long enough to take the full measure of his figure and features, so as that time or change could never deface their impress stamped deep on his memory. He, whom he observed was too wily and practised, to show any sign of discomposure at this scrutiny, but he felt its meaning in his very heart. In a moment more, Oost had swung down from a rope at the ship's prow; and by swimming and wading, soon reached the shore, where a communication was still kept open with the church-yard. William le Begue watched him awhile, with silent hopes that some chance-shot might catch him between wind and water; while Zweder Van Culembourg, peeping from the cabin-window, put up audible prayers that some hungry wave might swallow this very disagreeable addition to his acquaintance. But Oost safely reached the church-yard, just in time to deliver his discouraging answer to Floris Van Borselen, and to bear his share in a desperate shock which instantly took place, by the concentrated body of the Hoeks, advancing to the charge on the Kabblejaw position.

CHAPTER VIII.

"No, by St. Andrew! nothing shall prevent me," said Duke Philip, to the group of courtiers, who would have dissuaded him from quitting the vessel, some, from anxiety for his safety, others from the adulatory pretence of that feeling, and a few, perhaps, from regard to their own. "Let Sir Florival be lowered into the sea! What!—does any one counsel me to hang back at such a time as this? Such a one can be no friend to the glory of my house and name. Shall I suffer audacious Gloucester to triumph in the persons of yonder warriors? or shall they be destroyed but under the chastisement of mine own hand? Shall I not efface the shame of Amersfort, and crush at once both invading English and revolted Dutch? Let no man oppose me more—who loves me, follows me!"

With these words he grasped the standard of Burgundy, which stood prominent on the deck; and descending the vessel's side, he mounted the favourite horse, already known to our readers, which stood girth-deep in the water, docile from fright at the unusual scene, but seemingly re-assured as soon as his princely rider assumed his accustomed seat, and took the bridle into his hand. The horses belonging to the various knights, as well as to the whole body of cavalry composing the expedition, were disembarked from the transports with the greatest possible speed; and several hundred cavaliers were shortly in their saddles and ready for the charge.

Philip, in the mean time, had advanced with a group of chosen knights, somewhat indiscreetly to the beach; and rallying the broken Kabblejaws, chiefly the men of Delft and Dordrecht, he attacked Van Hemsted, while the Flemings, in large numbers, were busily employed with the English archers, and the other troops of that nation. These now fought purely on the defensive, being greatly outnumbered by their enemies, and somewhat disheartened by Lord Fitz-walter's retreat from the field. Philip soon cleared the passage through the opposing Hoeks, but not

without the loss of a Montmorency, a La Laing, a De Brimeau, and other officers of name and note. He soon reached the English line, hurried impetuously on, and had there nearly terminated his mortal career, for a skilful manœuvre on the part of Fitz-walter's successor completely led Philip and his chosen followers into the same scrape through which the Van Borselens had previously cut their way. The duke found himself suddenly surrounded, and nothing seemed left him but to sell his life as dearly as he could.

In this extremity, the man who some years before had saved him from a similar danger at the battle of Mons, now hastened to his rescue at the head of a body of men-at-arms, mixed of all the combined provinces, Burgundy, Artois, Picardy, Flanders, Brabant, and Holland. Each vied with the other in following up the example of their redoubted leader, John Vilain, the brave man of Ghent to whom Philip had proved his special confidence at Hesdin, as will be remembered. This champion broke irresistibly through the English line. At every blow of his battle-axe, he struck down an enemy, and his terrible words, following every blow, are recorded by abundant chroniclers and historians of this celebrated fight.

"Kill, kill them!" cried John Vilain, as the English archers, whose arrows being all expended were now reduced to their pikes and swords, fell right and left about him. "Kill them, ye who follow me, I will strike down enough to employ ye all!"

Among those who were particularly active in following up this ferocious order was observed Spalatro, the master-at-arms, who had closely attended his patron, Duke Philip, to the war, and who now showed particular skill in poniarding and cutting the throats of the stunned and wounded English. But this bravo's career was ended at this very climax of his glory. A dying man, sinking under his butchery, convulsively gave him a mortal wound, while himself in the very gasp of death, and both were trampled into eternity, under the undistinguishing hoofs of John Vilain's victorious followers.

The English never recovered this shock. The duke, when once extricated from his perilous situation, soon brought all his science to bear upon the various features of

the battle; but it was still hard-fought and doubtful, until an unlooked-for co-operation from another quarter ensured the victory to the bad cause, and by the instrumentality of perhaps the best man, whose destiny led him to give it his aid.

The combined attack of the Hoeks on Floris Van Borselen's division, was long continued and unflinchingly withstood. The old chieftain, rendered desperate by Oost's communication, exerted himself beyond all example to keep the fury of his men at the highest pitch; but he never suffered them or himself to be so far led away as to advance out of the strong position which was their great security against the numbers that assailed them. Every grave-stone and mound of the little enclosure formed a rampart of defence, and many a Kabblejaw fell on the spot under which his father's bones lay mouldering.

The men of Eversdyke were conspicuous for their valour, under the command of their two chieftains; but at length they had but one to fight for, and the other to revenge. Floris Van Borselen fell pierced with wounds, and as Oost stood over his body, a rude shield held before it while his own was uncovered, and the huge tourquois raised in menace to the foe, the dying chieftain had just time and strength to seize his son's hand, and to utter a few broken sentences of farewell.

"So! so!" cried he convulsively, "I have caught it at last! Vrank, my boy, I am going to join our ancestors in Heaven's glory—praise to St. Peter and St. Paul. Thy mother, Vrank, tell the good Vrowe I died like a Zeeland gentleman, and a brave Kabblejaw—make the best of your way to Eversdyke, my boy—put the castle in order—scour the guns—Tell Duke Philip I never flinched, even when he forsook me—and the Hoeks, Vrank! Oh! the damned Hoeks, never forgive them, Vrank—never, as you hope for pardon in heaven—never! and as for Jacqueline—Jezabel! let me call her—as for her, Vrank, if you value my dying blessing—if you dread my curse—as for her, never—never—oh, oh!—Ha! So! so!"

"Thank Heaven he has not finished the sentence!" was the first thought that found utterance from Vrank Van Borselen, as his father's ghastly corpse sank on his supporting arm. We know not if this was filial etiquette,

but we believe it to have been true to nature. It was, however, as brief in its duration as quick in its coming. The first fearful shudder over, lest the sacred words of the dying man had been a terrible command never to think of her whom he had quite resolved never to see, Vrank's whole mind fixed on the loss he had sustained.

"Oh, my noble sire!" exclaimed he, bitterly wringing his hands, "and are you gone indeed for ever? Pattern of high feeling and heroic courage, what must I do to prove myself your son? Revenge, revenge your death! Ah, revenge! revenge!"

The terrible word, thus terribly spoken, found echoes from every throat. Oost stooped to the earth and raised the bloody body in his arms. The Kabblejaws who gazed on it were nearly maddened by the sight. Frantic for vengeance, they called on Vrank to lead them on. He, inflamed like the rest, forgot his stiffened limbs and his weakened state from loss of blood, and casting one look more on the corpse, he put himself at the head of his men, and the whole line was in a few minutes clear beyond the church-yard dyke, and charging full upon the astonished enemy. As they hurried irresistibly on nothing could effectually oppose the torrent. Van Hemsted, the general of the Hoeks, sunk to the earth, and was trampled over by those who had no time to stop and end the pains of the wounded. The routed Hoeks fell back confusedly on the English line. This alone was wanting to complete the ruin of the latter. Philip, aided by Vilain and the other chiefs, now pressed on them at every other side of their position; and the militia of Veere and Zirikzee, which had as yet taken no share in the action, abandoned their neutrality to aid the winning cause.

A perfect butchery finished the honours of the day. The Hoeks, seeing every chance lost, and knowing they had no mercy to expect, fled towards the sea, and many escaped to the neighbouring islands. The English scorned to yield or fly, and were almost to a man destroyed. Only two hundred remained alive at night, of the gallant little army of the morning, and these being nearly all wounded were all made prisoners.

Lord Fitz-walter, seeing the fate of the day, and conscious that his own forced abandonment of his troops was

the main cause of their defeat, cursed in his heart the tyrant sense of honour that made him withdraw from his command. He was, more than once, on the point of rushing into the mêlée, unarmed as he was, and dying, a victim to the creed of chivalry. But his faithful squire restrained him from this step, by representing that were his body found among the slain, nothing could ever clear his memory from the reproach of having broken his knightly vow. This reasoning alone prevailed; and he suffered himself to be passively led to a boat that waited on the beach, in which he and his confidant put out to sea; and they were soon lost to sight, in the haze of floating smoke and atmospheric mist that hung on it close to shore.

It was not till he had penetrated deep among the *Hoeks*, and saw them utterly defeated, that Vrank, or, as he is now entitled to be called, Heer Borselen, had time or thought to pause and look round for his devoted follower, foster-father, and friend, poor Oost, whom he had not seen since the moment he burst, at the head of his furious followers, from the precincts of the fatal burying ground.

"And hetoo has fallen!" exclaimed Vrank, "true to the vow I have a hundred times heard him utter, to perish either in saving or revenging the head of the house of Eversdyke. Well, well! Peace to thee, rough and faithful vassal, intrepid warrior, and incorruptible man! Many a peer and prince might envy thy half savage nobleness of mind.—Peace to thee!"

The natural association of thought turned Vrank's eyes towards the church-yard, where his father's unburied body yet lay; and as he looked, he felt a throb of joy at observing his prematurely mourned foster-father, standing in an attitude of respectful sorrow over the corpse of his fallen chieftain. His shield and turquois lay on the ground; and, with hands clasped and head bent, he gave a picture of as solemn anguish as uncivilized man may be supposed to writhe under. But after a short time thus spent, as if in some deep mental prayer, he knelt down, suddenly raised the body in his arms and hugged it with terrible fervour, then laid it down again, sprang on his feet, seized his club and shield, danced, jumped, and with most frantic gestures of mingled grief and rage, performed some long-since forgotten rite of his country, in which pageantries were blend-

ed with the imperfect forms of Christian usage. There was something so fiercely agonizing in Oost's bearing as to overcome the effect of its preposterous absurdity. Not a man that gazed on him laughed or felt inclined to laugh. All, on the contrary, shuddered at the savage exhibition; and they turned away gladly from its painful observance, to resume the work of slaughter which had for a few minutes been suspended.

As soon as Vrank formed a junction with Philip and the troops whom he headed, and the victory was decided, the duke acknowledged, in presence of all the leaders, and in terms of unbounded praise, his obligations to the young chieftain of Eversdyke, to whose gallant and decisive movement he attributed the signal success of the day.—His better feelings were all up. He deplored sincerely the death of Floris Van Borselen, although he had nothing with which to reproach himself on that score, for he had distinctly intimated to William le Begue, and strictly meant to fulfil his intention of flying to his aid as soon as he could free himself a passage through the opponents to his landing. The turn given by the minister to the duke's message was dictated entirely by his own base object, one of the principal evils of despotism, which speaks through the channel of non-responsible corruption. Philip, however, fully proved to Vrank the impossibility of his giving the required succour, which the imminent peril of his own position left him in want of for himself; and in the impulse of excited and lofty feelings, of which he was very often susceptible, he promised to the son all the honours, confidence, and influence, which would have been expected by the father, had he survived the triumphant crisis.

Many other officers shared in like applause, and in substantial marks of his favour. He despoiled his person of rings, chains, and other ornaments, which he distributed to those who had fought nearest to him, or who had lost brothers or kinsmen in the battle. Among the latter were those who had to mourn for the redoubted knight De Beaufremont, De Mailli, De Bossuet, and several others.—But he who stood most conspicuous in both points of view was John Vilain, whose brother Adrien was among the killed, and who had himself been the principal author of Philip's rescue.

"For thee, heroic and unfortunate Fleming," said the grateful duke, "for thee, twice the saviour of thy sovereign's life, I have nought to give worthy of thy desert or of my gratitude. But wear this collar, knight of the golden fleece, from this moment—noble that shall be as soon as thy patent of promotion, with that of other gallant knights, can be made out; and here, on the spot, appointed governor of our strong fort of Rupelmonde, on which command thou art fully authorized to enter into prompt and well deserved possession. At this proud and hurried instant I cannot choose more marked means of doing thee honour."

Philip scarcely heard the bold Fleming's short but well-turned answer, in the din of victorious shouts which now burst out around him; French, Dutch, and Flemish all mixed in joyous confusion. The low groans of the wounded, or the deep curses of the few prisoners, were unheard in the clamour. Among the latter class was Van Hemsted, Philip's unfortunate rival commander on this disastrous day. His life was spared at the intercession of Vrank Borselen, by whose division he had been recovered from among heaps of slain, and into whose keeping he was specially entrusted. Few other Hoeks of any note fell into the victor's power. The flower of their fierce chivalry lay dead on the plains of Brouwershaven.

Imagination might find ample occupation in picturing the sequel of this terrible scene,—the boisterous rejoicings of the conquerors, the wild congratulations of surviving friends, the lamentations of the fallen, the noisy attentions given to the wounded, the expedients for the gratification of hunger, the efforts to obtain repose. Discipline had reached but very imperfect limits in those times, and after so complete a victory, which left nothing to apprehend on the score of a surprise, a scene of uproarious disorder and petty pillage was the natural result. But still one sad task gave occupation to many hands. This was the burial of the slain, the painful duty which keeps alive the excitement of the soldier's mind, even after all the fatigues of action, under which worn-out nature might be supposed to sink.—Several groups were already thus employed over the whole surface of the field, as soon as the sun had gone down, while the early moonbeams shone through a light

shower of snow, whose transparent flakes seemed sent from Heaven to shroud the scene so disfiguring the earth.

Among the men thus occupied with the dead were the few remaining of the English prisoners, who had miraculously escaped unhurt. These poor fellows felt it a sacred duty to look out among the slaughtered heaps, each for his own particular friends, or chosen comrades, to render their bodies the rude rites of sepulture, or take from them some tokens for their relatives in England, that might keep green the memory of those who died on the broad bed of honour in a foreign land.

Silence and melancholy were the natural features of the scene, and the actors in it performed their office, with the dreary air of men tired of the world in which they seemed to have lived a day too long. But of all, who, in small groups, or singly isolated from others, laboured in this sad vocation, one was prominent for his lingering, listless manner, as he leant on his spade and seemed to moralize deeply, or sat down on a dead body, or made lazy efforts to clothe it in a light covering of mould. This individual was slow Sefton, the soldier of the archer's company who formed one of the guard-tent party on that fatal morning. He looked around him often with a longing eye, to recognise some living face of old companionship, but he found none such; and could any of his late comrades have seen through the deep glaze of death, they could scarcely have known their old associate in his present altered state of mien and dress.

He was completely shorn of all the decorations of soldiery. His gabardine and burget were flung away, as well as the several weapons formerly mentioned as composing the equipment of an archer. A coarse buckram doublet covered his body, in place of the mailed shirt: the steel plates of which had been wont to shine so gayly in the sun, and instead of the brilliant skull-piece decked with a tuft of bright red feathers, his close-cropped, shock head was powdered thick with those falling flakes, which, as in Sylvester's winter description,

"Perriwig with snow the bald-pate woods;"

and his face was thickly clotted with perspiration, gun-powder, and blood.

said the compassionate soldier. "Cheer thee, cheer thee, Walter! Sit up straight man—why dost fall thus on one side? Thou hast a bold stomach, and a good courage—so, let thy head rise from thy breast. Holy Mary! how pale thou art! and what a frightful gash! Why, it has laid thy head and face open the whole length of the battle-axe blade! and, eh, what a stream of blood pours from thy side! Why, Walter! revive good youth, and speak to your friend, Jock Sefton—odds, my life, an' I don't believe he's now dead in earnest! This burst of sharp air on his lungs, this quick motion from his prostrate posture, or God wot what it is—for I'm dull in leech-craft—has out an' out killed him in the moment I thought him saved."

And it was even so. Honest Sefton's pains were all for nought. Poor Bassett's career, his ambitious aspirations, his hopes of love, were for ever set at rest.

"Body o' me, wert thou my own brother, I had not been more shocked!" exclaimed Sefton, looking mournfully in the dead man's face. "Well, Walter, this much I swear, that if life be spared me, and I get my liberty again from these damned Burgundians, and escape from these unlucky swamps, and ever see old England, and noble London city once more, my first visit shall be to Southwark to the sign of the White Hart. And there, if little Cecily still serves at the bar as of old, in her red kirtle and green boddice, with her sparkling black eye, her rosy cheek, and come-kiss-me lips, there will I give her a true account of these woful doings,—and, let me see, what token shall I bring her of the lad that loved her so truly? His hair's all too clotted with blood, not to set her mad outright with grief—but here hangs the amulet, the herb-stuff of which was gathered by her own pretty fingers. I'faith, there's blood on it too—but then it comes from poor Walter's very heart, and that was the same as her own. Lie there, deceiving bauble of false security, there, in my doublet-pouch. It is for thee, little Cecily—and I vow to the holy St. Jude, in this awful hour, to place it in thy hands, as a pilgrim from the holy land might offer a relic to our lady of grace. Eh, saints of Heaven! what a gash it was! That was the true double stroke of fate—for while it split poor

Walter's head, much I fear me 'twill break poor Cecily's heart!"

Sefton soliloquized no more, but walked slowly away in search of some refuge from cold, hunger, and sorrow.

CHAPTER IX.

IN proportion as the success at Amersfort had raised the Hoeks to extravagance, the disastrous day of Brouwer-shaven plunged them in despair. They made many protracted struggles for political existence during full half a century later than that time, but no marked effort worthy of their former notoriety, either as a faction, or in their better aspect, as champions of popular right opposed to aristocratic oppression.

But the battle on which we have endeavoured to fix the reader's attention, was an event of infinitely higher importance, as it regarded Europe in general and more particularly England, than in relation to its influence on the domestic interests of Holland and Zealand. Duke Philip of Burgundy had for the first time dyed his sword in British blood. His private hatred to Gloucester had overpowered his repugnance to hostility against the nation with whom he had hitherto acted in ardent alliance. His long-cherished vengeance against Charles VII. of France, seemed to fade before this new developement of passion, in proportion as personal enmity is stronger than filial resentment or national dislike. The bond of union between Burgundy and Britain was completely rent asunder, and never in Philip's person renewed. He abandoned the common cause, and went over to the common enemy—but not at once, or with the startling inconsistency of a more impetuous mind. His Dutch affairs gave him ample occupation for some time to come; and every excuse for a junc-

tion with France was allowed to acquire plausibility and force, until the gradual ruin of English domination in that country justified the policy that abandoned a falling cause.

Humphrey of Gloucester was assuredly the proximate provocation of all this. His contract with Jacqueline, upheld for awhile with such headlong imprudence, but violated so basely and so soon, was the true source of all the losses, and disgrace of England. Whatever illusions may have been carried down to posterity, respecting him, founded on the too-loosely lavished epithet attached to his name, he must stand convicted in true history as the author of irreparable injury to his country, and with one deep and indelible stain on his character; and having brought him to the term of public disgrace, we must now leave him to pursue his career of domestic indignity.

The Duke of Bedford, that true specimen of the best qualities of the age he ornamented, was in England at the present period of our tale, counteracting his brother's violent struggles to reinforce Fitz-walter's army, and obtaining the positive refusal of the parliament to sanction a plan too sure to hasten the natural catastrophe of a breach with Philip. That point obtained, Bedford returned to France, to resume the duties of his regency, and oppose his wonted vigour to the combined efforts of the Dauphin (or the King of Bourg, as he was still called in the disparaging parlance of England,) and of De Richemont, who had begun in Brittany that open hostility, which he made, in his subsequent capacity of constable of France, so fatal to English interests.

But all these individuals, though prominent in the great movements of the time, are minor personages, in comparison with her whose private happiness and political existence all hinged on the passing events. To her we must now return; and having painted her apathy when successful, and her indifference when forsaken, endeavour to portray the still deeper and more sublime traits of her character, in total abandonment, and all but utter ruin. The natural strength of Jacqueline's constitution, and her innate force of mind, had shaken off, without any effort, the illness so strictly derivable from a moral cause. Vulgar observers attributed her recovery to joy at the successful

resistance of the town in which she was cooped up, the fall of which must have compromised her liberty, or put even her life in risk. Van Monfoort in his coarse delight, overpowered her with details of heroic exploits, which all fell dead upon her mind, that would erewhile have thrilled with sympathy. Her mother endeavoured to arouse her with hopes of ultimate triumph and incitements to vengeance, the first of which wearied, while the latter disgusted her. Benina Beyling strove to cheer her by well-meant, but weak arguments, drawn from the fountain of her own delusions, which shone in bright but unreal colouring like the iris formed by sunshine playing upon froth. But all was in vain. Jacqueline seemed to endure life only as a burthen sufficient to fatigue, but not weighty enough to bear her down. Such were the feelings of the principal group contained in the strong place of Amersfort, when Jacqueline's brother, Lewis, arrived from Zealand with the discouraging news, that the Vetkoopers, with their leader, Syarda, had nearly succumbed under their and Jacqueline's enemies, the Schieringers, and that no co-operation was to be expected from that quarter.—The base submission of Zweder Van Culembourg to the Duke of Burgundy, was confirmed about the same time. And as a last drop to brim the cup of ill-fate, the news from Brouwershaven did not long linger behind, proving the truth of the proverb which gives a gregarious impulse to misfortunes.

The intelligence was like a thunderbolt to the excited and over-sanguine Hoeks. The actual effect on the chief individuals whom we have named, may be best judged from the hurried and irregular council, which they held together on receiving the afflicting news.

Jacqueline sat one day in the private apartment where we last pictured her to our readers, and her thoughts were, in all likelihood, turned back to the most impressive and important incident of her whole life, of which it was a few weeks before the scene; for though events of more public importance had been ripe during her chequered career, nothing like that interview with Vrank Borselen had so affected her heart or so compromised her happiness. Having ascertained through Van Monfoort (to whom the grateful youth had communicated the news,) that

Vrank had escaped the dangers of that evening, and subsequently that he had found means, by the aid of gold, the master-key to human sympathy, to evade all pursuit, and join Duke Philip's army, she had no longer to endure the agony of fear which had for a while oppressed her; and as she recovered from that and its consequence on her health, she gradually settled down into the hopeless composure we have described. She imposed a positive order on Benina never in the remotest way to allude to Van Borselen, and she inflicted on herself the penance of never mentioning his name. But when she would have put an interdict on thought, she found the utter fruitlessness of the attempt; and, in despair of banishing the one beloved object from her mind, she let it reign paramount there in unresisted despotism.

On the day at which we have now arrived, she sat in her accustomed manner, looking out on the cheerless aspect of the garden. Benina Beyling occupied a stool at the other side of the flaming brazier. Both were employed in that apparently listless way, which relieves the anxious mind—the one in tracing fancied likenesses to shrubs and flowers in the snow-flakes that clothed the branches without; and the other, finding the semblance of animal monsters in the burning coal that warmed the room within.

"Prithee, Benina," at length said Jacqueline, "tune the Rebeck, and sing me a stanza from Alain Chartier's 'Book of the four Ladies.' It is, in sooth, a pleasant strain of mingled sweet and sad; its pastoral opening savours of nature's own odours; and the laments of the four hapless damsels go each and all to my very heart."

"My kind mistress," replied Benina, "I must not now turn to melancholic strains, but will rest on those sweet preludes, which are more suiting to sick minds;" and taking up the rebeck which lay on a table close by, she ran over a few chords, and then sang, in a murmuring recitative, and with a slight accompaniment, the following opening verses of the poem alluded to by Jacqueline.

"To banish care and sweeten life,
One morning mild I sought the fields;
'Twas one of those young days that yields
Respite from sorrow and from strife—
When heart with heart its soft nest builds,
And love, and hope, and joy are rife.

"The birds around were fluttering,
And each one, with the other vying,
Sang, as it rose on ardent wing,
So very sweet, it made my heart
Flutter as though 'twould bear a part
In the gay music of the spring.

"No cloud defaced the joyous day,
The blue heavens shone in the mild ray,
The violets sprang beneath my feet,
And all things looked and smelled so sweet,
'Twas plain that Nature's own hand made them,
And they did just what nature bade them.

"The feathered tribes were in the grove;
Some sang, while other swelling throats
In doubled warblings echoing strove
To send back nature's thrilling notes.
All looked alike, yet none the same,
As, beyond count, they went and came;
And I, reclined, within the brake,
Marvelled aloud that heaven should make
Things like them, in a way so strange,
So novel, yet so free from change.
But still more wondrous 'twas to see
That each, with new-born love elate,
Whether in air, on earth, or tree,
Was coupled with one chosen mate!

"The coney and the timid hare
Ran through the leaves and flow'rets fair,
Spring held all nature in its thrall,
And love seemed lording it o'er all;
While nought could there grow old or die,
Though time changed to eternity.

"The grass sent out so sweet a balm
That fragrant filled the loaded air,
While murmuring through the valley calm
A gurgling streamlet wandered there;
And thirsty trees, that bent and drank,
With green leaves fringed the flowery bank.

"And there wild fowls in flocks resorted,
Ducks, herons, ring-doves, pheasants came.
While some the leafy arbour courted,
Others within the bright wave sported;
But if they flew, or if they swam,
All were as happy in the glade
As uncaged birds could hope to be.
The wild deer stopped to mark their glee—
But heaven, whose bright eye pierced the shade,
Knows what a chattering noise they made!

"Yet then it was my heavy heart
 Most mourned in that most pleasant place,
 Where all seemed fashioned to impart
 Joyaunce, delight, repose, and peace—
 Where nothing but some bright-winged bird
 The drowsy calm of nature stirred,
 Save a soft breezelet sighing on,
 So still I only knew 'twas there,
 By the fresh scents that filled the air
 From the wild flowers it breathed upon.

"And yet—though this blest spot was full
 Of all that nature's hands could form
 Of bright, and pure, and beautiful,
 Of rich and soft, and bland and warm,—
 Yet was I sad while all was gay,
 And gloom seemed mantling the bright day,
 For she I love was far away!"*

"Enough, enough, dear Benina!" exclaimed Jacqueline, when her friend and confidant had gone so far; "these sweet and thrilling pictures of pastoral joy make my heart

* I had meant to have inserted here only the original lines, above freely imitated; but reflecting that very few English readers were likely to be familiar with the French language, as written 400 years ago, I thought it better to accompany the verses with the best translation I could effect, though that was still very imperfect. Those who take the trouble to read the one may probably be induced to study the other; and finally led to consult the pages of some of those early French poets, who abound in the graceful naivete which constitutes the great charm of the present specimen. Alain Chartier flourished at the epoch of my story. He was in high favour; subsequently, at the court of Charles VII., and it may not be amiss to repeat an oft-told anecdote, as an instance of deep feeling for literary merit. While Chartier one day slept on a bench, in an ante-room of the palace, the dauphiness happened to pass, with some ladies of her train. She stopped, stooped, and kissed the poet, all ugly as he was; and on one of her attendants expressing surprise, she said, "she kissed the mouth for the sake of the sweet strains that issued from it." This fact, more than my imitation, may bespeak some favour for the following extract from the "*Livre des Quatre Dames*."

Pour oublier melancholie,
 Et pour faire chiere plus lie,
 Ung doux matin aux champs issy,
 Du premier jour qu'amours ralie
 Les cueurs en la saison joie,
 Fait ceaser ennuy et souey,
 Si allay tout senlet ainsi.

ache with envy. Pass on, prithee, to the grievous laments of the four ladies, and choose me her's, Benina, which seems to thee most sad—the first, whose lover was killed

Tout autour oiseaulx voletoient,
Et si tres-doucement chantoient,
Qu'il n'est cueur qui n'en fust joyeux,
Et en chantant en l'air montoient,
Et puis l'un l'autre surmontoient
A l'estriuve à qui mieulx mieulx.
Le temps n'estoit mie mieux,
De bleu estoient vestuz les cieux,
Et le beau soleil cler luisoit,
Violettes croissoient par lieux,
Et tout faisoit ses deuoirs tieux,
Comme Nature le duisoit.

En buissons oyseaux s'assembloient
L'ung chantoit, les autres doubloient
Leurs gorgettes, qui verboioient
Le chant que Nature a apris,
Et puis l'ung, de l'autre sembloient,
Et point ne s'entre ressembloient;
Tant en y eut que ilz sembloient
Fors à estre en nombre compris.
Si m'arrestay en ung pourpris
D'arbres, en pensant en hault pris
De nature, qui entrepris
A les faire or ainsi harper.
Mais de joie lez viz surpris,
Et d'amour nouvelle entrepris
Et ung chasseur avoit iapris
Et choisy ung seul loyal per.
Les arbres regarday flourir,
Et lieures et connins courir.
Du printemps tout s'esionyssoit,
La sembloient amour seignourir.
Nul n'y peult vieillir ne mourir,
Ce me semble, tant qu'il y soit.
Des herbes ung flair doulx issoit,
Que l'air sery adoulcissoit,
Et en bruïant par la valee
Ung petit ruissellet passoit,
Qui les pays amoitiassoit.
Dont l'eau n'estoit pas salée.
Tout au plus pres sur le pendant
De la Montaigne en descendant
Fut assiz ung joyeux bocage
Qui au ruissel s'alloit pendant,
Et vertes courtines tendant
De ses branches sur le rinage.

at Agincourt; the third, whose dear friend went to the battle and was heard of no more, or she, who had to deplore the cowardice of him who fled from the foe, and was dishonoured for ever."

"Or the second lady's chant, my sweet mistress—she whose young lover, only twenty years of age, was taken by the English and kept prisoner?" asked Benina, influenced by her sympathy with English renown, and in hopes of reviving Jacqueline's affection, even at the risk of pain to her feelings by this home allusion, without actually breaking her commands.

"No, Benina, pass by that—I need not such a memento of my folly, or my grief."

Benina started at this direct admission and mention of the subject, heretofore so cautiously abstained from. A deep blush on Jacqueline's cheek showed she had been taken by surprise, and was angry either with herself or the cause of her indiscreet exclamation. But before she could recover from, or plunge deeper into her confusion, an interruption took place, which involved her in a thousand-fold greater suffering connected with its object.

Countess Marguerite abruptly entered the room, pale with agitation; and forgetting all her usual attention to Jacqueline's delicate state, she exclaimed,

"Daughter, ill news comes thick on us. Bear up now

*La haute maint oysel sauvage,
L'ung vole, l'autre au ruïssel nage,
Canes, ramiers, herons, faisans;
Et les cerfz passoient par l'ombrage
De ces oissillons hors de cage.
Dièn scet s'ilz y estoient taisans!
Alors non cueur se guermentoît
De la grant douleur qu'il portoit,
En ce plaisant lieu solitaire,
Vu ung doux ventelet ventoit,
Si sery qu'on ne le sentoît,
Fors que violette mieulx flaire.*

*La fust le graciaux repaire
De ce que nature a peu faire,
De bel et joyeux en esté.
La nâvoit il riens a reffaire
De tout ce qu'il me pourroit plaire,
Mais que ma dame y eust esté.*

for the worst that could befall—for total ruin. Your tyrant cousin, my hated nephew Philip, whom may God in his mercy keep from hence, or *take!* has cut the English and the Hoeks to pieces in Schowen."

"Alas! poor Benina!" said Jacqueline, perceiving the shock which this sudden announcement caused her friend, who, on the old countess's entrance, had with courtly respect stood up, but who sunk on her seat again as the fatal sentence was uttered.

"Why, daughter! Jacqueline! Is it thus you receive the news of your undoing? Is it by lavishing attentions on a sensitive maid of honour that the Countess of Holland and Hainault should meet this blow of fate! Have you no sense of your own, of mine, of your country's ruin?"

"Heaven knows, mother, my heart bleeds for its losses and for yours—for myself I care not, but I deeply feel for my poor Benina."

"I know not how she is concerned in this, or why she should claim a thought in such a crisis. I tell thee, daughter, thy cause is irreparably lost."

"Praise to the Virgin! I am then without fear as without hope."

"Oh, God, I could burst with spite and rage!" cried Countess Marguerite. "Is it thus the blood of Bavaria and Burgundy sinks down? Ah, here comes Van Monfoort with the very herald of our doom."

And at this instant the fierce chieftain entered the chamber, accompanied by one of those fear-stricken messengers of defeat, who magnify even the worst on such occasions, to justify their panic and palliate their flight.

"Noble ladies, my very good mistresses," cried Van Monfoort, yet almost unable to articulate from passion—"ye have heard the brief tidings of ruin—here is the witness reeking from his course by field and ~~field~~—all is lost—all! What is now to be done?"

"Tell me, good fellow," said Countess Marguerite, sternly, "what is the truth of this? Thy ill-omened look speaks a frightful amount of evil—what is the sum of our loss?"

"Every thing, noble dame! nought has escaped captivity, deroute, or death," replied the downcast Hoek.

"A fearful reckoning, in sooth! And now, raven-voiced

fatalist, for thy details!—What men of note—what leaders have fallen!”

“A long list, Madam—both the Hemsteds—I saw their bodies trampled over by—”

“Both!” exclaimed Van Monfoort—and a deep groan, accompanied by a thump with doubled fist on his breast-plate, spoke his affliction.

“Besides these,” continued the messenger; but the chieftain fiercely stopped him, and starting forwards and seizing him by the shoulder exclaimed:—

“Hold there,—give no other name—at least lest thou tally an enemy for every friend. What Kabblejaws have been killed? out with the muster-roll of death, and let it be long and bloody!”

“First, then, is Van Borselen—”

“What! art sure, comrade? Didst speak truly? Van Borselen?”

“I saw his corpse borne off in the arms of a huge Fri-son, long ere the fight was ended.”

“Wo, wo to me for ever!” exclaimed old Ludwick, with the harsh energy of hate, that turns inward and breaks its baffled vengeance on self, but which neither his brother Hoek, nor the Countess Marguerite, both of whom watched him closely, could comprehend.

“Wo, wo! my best friends killed by the enemy, and my deadliest foe fallen by another hand than mine! The first I could have borne—but the latter! oh misery! Have I outlived Van Borselen, and yet not had the strangling of him in this grasp!”

While Van Monfoort clenched with both hands his rapier in savage force, and muttered this fierce soliloquy, Countess Marguerite’s attention was turned to Jacqueline, by an exclamation from Benina Beyling, who was roused from her own fears by the more evident and severer anguish of her mistress. As Van Monfoort, in hearing the name of Borselen, could suppose no one but his old enemy, so could Jacqueline imagine in the same sound no one but her young lover. While the rude chieftain throbbed with smothered vengeance, the gentle countess thrilled with despair; and Benina’s eyes being fixed on her alone, the death-like pallor of her cheek was noticed just in time. allow this faithful friend catching her in her arms, ere, in wo-

hausted feeling caused her to sink back insensible. Countess Marguerite joined her efforts with Benina's to revive the beautiful sufferer; but even in this occupation, which would have absorbed the feelings of a more tender mother, she found time for other questions touching the fatal battle.

"And where," continued she, in broken phrase, while she looked alternately on Jacqueline, or towards the messenger, "where were those braggart islanders—those vaunted English? Did they nought for the common cause?"

"Madam, they fought like lions, and fell like heroes, each man in his rank, where he stood; and they all died with honour, save one who abandoned the rest and fled."

"And he—who is the recreant?"

"The general Fitz-walter!"

"Beggar! thou liest—basely, odiously liest! 'tis false—'tis impossible!" exclaimed the hitherto timid and yielding Benina, roused far beyond her general tone of feeling or manner, by this aspersion on him whom she considered as the very flower of chivalry. The old countess and Van Monfoort stood absorbed in wonder at this display of unusual energy, and each irresistibly marvelled at the secret it betrayed.

Benina never for a moment abandoned her anxious care of Jacqueline, but while applying every possible means to revive her, her eye was fixed with an indignant expression on the soldier. He in his turn got warm, and raising his dagger to his mouth he kissed its hilt, and exclaimed,

"Lady! I pardon your young heart, which haply urges this unmeasured language. But, by the holy cross, I swear, I saw Fitz-walter fly from the combat, and stand aloof, while his soldiers fell in slaughtered heaps!"

"Fly!" echoed Benina, "'tis false! 'tis false!"

"It matters not, one recreant more or less," said Countess Marguerite.

"With your good leave, noble dame, it does," exclaimed Van Monfoort, "when there is a question of the honour of such a knight. Tell me, brother soldier and fellow sufferer in this cause, did the English general quit the field ere Philip entered it?"

"No, my noble knight. In truth he only fled as if in terror at sight of the tyrant."

"Patience, damsel!" said Van Monfoort, preventing a

"A

renewed explosion of Benina's indignation. "One word reconciles all this, and redeems Fitz-walter's fame. I know he is bound by knightly pledge never to stand up in fight where Philip shows his person. A fatal pledge, I fear me, to us all!"

"Heaven be praised! if his honour be clear from stain," cried Benina; "and you, brave soldier, pardon me, and say, oh, say is Fitz-walter safe?"

"I know not, in sooth, fair mistress; he is most likely captive," replied the man.

Farther words were prevented, first by Jacqueline's recovery from her temporary unconsciousness, and her evident anxiety to discover whether any imprudent confession had escaped her. Satisfied by Benina's re-assuring expressions, she, like the rest, had time to turn her attention to the presence of her brother Lewis, who hastily entered from the garden.

"Oh, my dear Jacqueline," said the ardent and affectionate young man, embracing his sister, "oh, most persecuted and first of women, how my heart grieves for thy fate. Thy whole possessions, thy every chance are lost! For, besides this frightful news, a messenger this moment comes breathless and spent from Brussels, to say, that John of Brabant lies at the point of death."

"That he may sink!" muttered Countess Marguerite, in a tone, which left none of her unspoken meaning to the imagination of her hearers.

"And has sent to thee, Jacqueline, his last request that you will fly to him, to receive his expiring breath, and assure him of your forgiveness. Say, my sister, what wilt thou resolve on, in so strange, so awful a crisis as this?"

"Resolve on? why to let the base tyrant die in shame and guilt, to be sure—to stay here, firmly entrenched in this victorious town, and if needs must be, buried in its ruins! 'Tis thus I venture to speak for my gracious mistress, in trust that she will bear out my words," cried Ludwick Van Monfoort. But a far different notion had taken possession of Jacqueline's mind, suddenly but irrevocably, at the very moment that her brother announced the important message, and while her heart still throbbed with the anguish of her recent shock.

"We do not wish to paint Jacqueline as more than wo-

man, but, as she really was, of the first order of female minds. The decision she now formed, was well in keeping with that mingled humanity and courage which we love to see in her character. She saw no object before her, but the dying wretch who had been in form her husband, whose fate she had once vowed to share, and from whose presence she had been driven solely by his own brutality and consummate incapacity in all ways that could reconcile a beautiful and spirited young woman to such a mate. Now she forgot at once all his former vileness; or if remembered, it was only with that blessed balm of forgiveness, which none but a woman's heart can pour over the memory of wrong. She at once made up her mind to accept her nominal husband's summons, and to fly to the side of his death-bed.

"Lewis," said she, in a tone tremulous but unbroken, of firmness, yet of feeling, and with no accent of reproach towards Van Monfoort, "I am resolved and ready to repair to Brussels. Heaven and the saints forbid that I should refuse the boon asked by a dying man. Thou shalt accompany me. Get horses ready for me and Benina. We have not a moment to lose."

The air which accompanied these words struck the lion of Urk quite dumb. He turned aside, abashed at his bold interference with her movements, and his misconception of her motives; and he as speedily and implicitly submitted to her dictates, as when she was in all the triumph of victory and apparent stability of power. Countess Marguerite silently pondered the question for awhile, but she soon ceased to reflect on a decision which she was resolved to abet. She must not be suspected of any sympathy with that womanly generosity or christian benevolence, which actuated her daughter. As far as her feelings were affected, her wretched nephew and son-in-law might have gone down into the grave or *farther*, without one effort to soothe his remorse. But she saw in the present circumstances a most fortunate opportunity of recovery from the ruin which seemed, a few minutes before, quite overwhelming. She remembered Jacqueline's great popularity in Brabant and Hainault, and particularly in Brussels, where her residence had encouraged gayety and luxury in the nobles, and consequent prosperity among the citizens

at large. The former interference of the people in her favour, when their remonstrances saved her from the duke's outraging tyranny, returned to Countess Marguerite's mind, although it was at the moment quite forgotten by her own. Hatred to St. Pol, who, in case of his brother's death would be sure to advance immediate claims to the dukedom, was not without its influence on the old countess. Altogether, she saw that the moment was arrived for one new struggle in her daughter's favour, and consequently for her own importance; and she cogitated for a few minutes how best to disavow the divorce pronounced by Benedict, XIII. and declare Jacqueline's adhesion to the bull of Martin V. which confirmed her marriage with the Duke of Brabant, and would, in the event of his death, be her best title to his succession. Her mind, however, being made up on the principle—or want of principle—she did not at such a moment lose time by reflecting on the details; but with a few assenting words to Jacqueline's decision, not, however, touching on her own private motives, she hastily quitted the scene of this brief and accidental council. Jacqueline with Benina also left the room at the same instant. Lewis of Hainault was already out in the court, making immediate preparation for departure; and Ludwick Van Monfoort, when he recovered from his bewilderment at the rapid close of the conference, found himself standing in the middle of the chamber, accompanied solely by the run-away soldier, who gazed on the chieftain, as the latter did on him, as if neither had yet formed an exact estimate of his relative positions. Ludwick was the first to recover his self-command. He looked round, and saw that the more important personages had retired, and that in the present aspect of things, each individual was left to follow his sense of right or wrong. He could not resist a feeling of mortification and pique at the disregard of his opinion so unceremoniously shown by Jacqueline. He resolved not to be a partner in a scheme which, as it was opposed to his own views, he was resolved to see pregnant with evil. He decided on not volunteering to accompany the expedition on which the countesses were about to start, and which he was not invited to join. Like a good soldier and an unflinching Hoek, he gave his whole thoughts to the preservation of such of his followers as might choose

to share his fortunes, and he resolved on evacuating the town which no point of honour called on him to devote to ruin, when once his sovereign countess had withdrawn her person from it. His future course he left to fate, or to chance, we should rather say, for such, with a deep dash of ferocious courage, was the great impulse of such commanders as he.

"Well, comrade!" exclaimed he, as he roused up from his short reverie, with a violence of voice and gesture that made his companion start, "well, brave brother, for brave I know thee to be, though perhaps thou hadst better have died in Schowen than told its sad story here, thou seest how the world wags and how fortune drives. We have nought for it now but dauntless hearts and daring deeds. Our noble mistress, as thou seest, spurns my advice, that she should stand steady here, in the certainty of glorious destruction, and goes off at the summons of a whining hypocrite, whose fear of hell tells him he was a sinner, and makes him fancy he repents. Dead or alive, John of Brabant can claim nothing from his wife, nor do her aught but evil. But mark my words, she is going into the pitfall of deceit and danger, when trusting herself into contact with Philip de St. Pol; but if an evil star light the path, where is the use of picking one's steps? What say'st thou, friend, wilt follow me? Wilt share my fate?"

"Will I, noble Ludwick? Will the hounds follow the huntsman, or the hawk come at the falconer's call, and shall not I track the steps of the boldest prop of chivalry and the bravest Hoek in Holland? I am yours, brave knight, for life and death, so as you but lead me to vengeance on the Kabblejaws—I ask no more."

"Thy hand, good friend!" responded Ludwick; and having grasped the hard fist, freely thrown forth on his summons, he gave and took such a reciprocity of squeeze, as would have cramped the muscles and crushed the bones of a modern hero; and ending the manual accolade with a mystic pressure of thumb—the token of true Hoekery, (but which no babbling brother has betrayed to the listening ear of history) the Lion of Urk strided off with his follower, to do such deeds as vengeance might warrant, or desperation dictate.

Ere Jacqueline and her companions had completed their

scanty preparations, or that the palfreys could be caparisoned under the care of Lewis of Hainault, the scouts of the victor's advanced guard were close to the walls of Amersfort. We may well imagine, but could not easily depict, the consternation and confusion of such a moment. The unfortunate heroine of the scene, borne up on the springs of excited sentiment, wore an air of almost unearthly energy throughout. Her promptness, her decision, her tone of command, not imperiously harsh, but as though the genius of female heroism was embodied in her person, almost overcame the sensitive delicacy of Benina's weaker mind.—While she gazed on her mistress in astonishment, or wildly reverted to her own anxieties, Jacqueline seemed to have no look, nor thought, but for the high and holy object on which her heart was bent. There was a religious fervour on her bearing, which awed even those who did not know her purpose; while those who did, regarded her as a victim, self-devoted to the certainty of dangers, tenfold greater than those which threatened her on the spot she was about to quit.

Among the latter were Van Monfoort and those of the household to whom he hastily announced the destination towards which Jacqueline was hurrying. At one moment he resolved to make known to the citizens, what he was determined to believe an insane rushing upon ruin, in hopes that he might rouse them for their own, as well as their sovereign's sake, to arrest her progress. But Ludwick was a moment too late. Jacqueline and her suite, consisting of Lewis, Benina, and some half-dozen mounted attendants, with the Brussels messenger, had quickly trotted through the portal, ere the bewildered burgher clearly caught the general's meaning; and history was thus robbed of another instance of those out-bursts of affectionate violation, to what, in less popular governments than existed then, would be looked on as treason against "the right divine."

Countess Marguerite could neither prepare for so quickly, nor contemplate with such ease, a two days' journey on horseback, no more than she could reconcile herself to form one on a visit of peace and mercy to the wretched object against whose life she had so lately plotted. She therefore resolved to place herself in the protection, and throw

warning of ill, and the growing strength of a character which had never known its own power. That some calamity was to fall on the house of Borselen had become a fixed conviction of her mind, ever since the hour of Vrank's sudden departure from Eversdyke. The rapture caused by his short visit was, to her superstition, like the lightning before death—the expiring gleam of that lamp of domestic happiness, which she had watched as intently as some vestal priestess of old, whose vigils were inspired by fanaticism mixed with fear.

Sternness was not the natural feature of Vrouwe Bona's disposition; but she had caught enough of it, from the reflection of her husband's character and the habit of the times, to cause her commands, during Heer Borselen's absence, to be implicitly observed. To be left undisturbed was the amount of her orders for several days past. The household, now reduced to the old seneschal, the children's duenna, and a few serving-maids, had rigidly observed her wishes. The usual discipline of the family prevailed more particularly at this period, and a deep and unsocial gloom pervaded the castle. The very children caught its influence, and not a laugh, not a whisper of merriment broke the solitude in which Vrouwe Bona's dignity awaited the confirmation of her evil bodings.

While she still gazed out, in rigid preparation for some sight or sound of ill, the splash of oars was distinctly borne to her ear, in the interval between the bounding of the waves, as before described, in sad-sounding breakers over the pier. The anxious woman's heart throbbed high in her breast; her breath was, for a moment, suspended; and while her eyes strained more strongly still towards the beach, she dimly saw a figure breaking through the mist, like some apparition, floating in the vague imagining of a dream. A moment more brought forth its terrible reality. It was Oost, the dyke-digger, in the same wild habiliments which he had worn during the conflict of the preceding day, his dress still disfigured with the bloody marks, which he had but imperfectly washed from his hands and his furrowed face. The hoar-frost had settled on his frouzed and matted hair. His weather-beaten features wore a more desperate expression than ever. There was an awful energy in his air, as he stalked towards the castle gate,

with eyes keenly darting towards the open casement, while one hand grasped his rarely abandoned weapon, and the other held firmly the folds of a mantle, which covered some heavy object, borne on his left shoulder.

The woman who acted as porter at the gate—for every man, capable of marching and wielding arms, was gone to battle—shrunk back with dread into her nook at sight of Oost's appalling form and look. The bandogs in the fosse, with whom his own was chained up, sent forth a plaintive howl, in tune with the whine of recognition uttered by the latter, as the free Frison crossed the draw-bridge, and cast a passing glance at his shaggy favourite below. But even that object of his deep regard could not arrest his step, nor draw forth one word from his compressed lips. As he mounted the upper corridor, having passed the untenanted hall, he met the old and unwieldy seneschal, who putting aside the grey locks that shaded his brows, placed himself right in the middle of the passage, to know by whom, and on what authority, the strict order of etiquette was violated.

"Ah! Mynheer Oost, the dyke-digger!" said he, as he recognized the uncereemonious visitor—"the most welcome of new comers to the hall of Eversdyke! The heart of the good Vrouwe, our noble and gracious mistress, will rejoice at thy presence, for she waits for the news thou bringest. But softly, softly, friend Oost, whither goest thou so fast? Halt, I prithee, old hunter of the woods! Thou must not pass farther, till I duly announce thee to my Vrouwe.—Stand fast! Thou must not force thy way."

As the old functionary spoke these words, he placed himself athwart the corridor, with open arms; and his bulky person very nearly filled the narrow pass, in a manner to force Oost to the alternative of overthrowing him on the floor, or of stopping to hold a parley. He chose the latter measure.

"Grey-headed servitor of the house of Borselen, faithful follower of its fate, sit thee down at rest, and oppose me not!" said Oost, in a tone of harsh solemnity, that filled the seneschal with unwonted awe. Yet he was not to be so easily turned out of the long-followed chandel of official form.

"Good Oost, thy looks are formidable, and thy speech imposing—but thou canst not pass till the pleasure of my Vrouwe is spoken."

"Her *pleasure*, old man! I carry my warrant to enter her most holy sanctuary.—Stand by, and let me pass!"

"I tell thee no warrant of living man—nought but that of the chieftain's own hand can break through Vrouwe Bona's orders for privacy from all intrusion—so rest thee, rest thee awhile, good Oost, till I speak thy name into her ear, and learn if she find thy visit fitting."

Oost placed his turquois against the wall, and, with giant gentleness, grasped the seneschal's arm, which he raised on a level with his own breast, and placed it under the mantle that covered his burthen.

"No warrant of living man—the chieftain's own hand, saidst thou?" exclaimed he, in a deep, thrilling whisper.—"Here, then, is my passport!"

"The saints be my speed! what horror is that!" cried the seneschal, recoiling from the object he had involuntarily touched.

"I may now pass on?" said Oost, in a tone of gloomy depth. The old man waved his hand in silent assent, for not a word could pass his chattering teeth, as he sunk on his oaken stool, with fixed eye and shuddering frame, as though palsy or convulsion had suddenly seized him. Oost said no more, but held on his course till he reached the door of the well known chamber, from the casement of which he had seen Vrouwe Bona's anxious and care-worn countenance.

He undid the clumsy fastening, pushed open the door, and entered. Vrouwe Bona was standing in the middle of the room, her strained looks fixed on the fearful object, whose approach she advanced so far to meet. She thought not, as of old, of the dignity of position, nor arrangement of dress. She stood up to meet a heavy blow; and the naked grandeur of natural feeling scorned the false drapey of artificial forms.

"Come forward, faithful friend—speak! I am prepared for the worst—thy tidings are already told in that fearful look! What bearest thou there? said she, in the boldly expressive idiom of her native land.

Oost hesitated as he strove to speak, and faltered as he would have advanced. His rough nature was overpowered by her tone and look of marble despair.

"On thy fealty, and thy love for me and mine, I conjure, I command thee to tell me all! The bow is bent to the utmost—'twill snap in twain, if held longer on the stretch!"

With these words the suffering woman placed her hands upon her heart, as if to repress some more than common pang.

"Need I tell the fiat of fate?" exclaimed Oost, with unwonted pathos of tone. "Does not the dead speak with the tongueless voice? Is not the stiffened corpse more eloquent than words?" and as he pronounced the fearful confirmation of every superstitious forewarning, he laid his mantle-covered load on the stone table that occupied the middle of the room. He then stood, like some priest or augur at a sacrifice, with his hand on the concealed object, as though he muttered some prayer or incantation, before he unveiled the mystery of the reeking victim which lay beneath his grasp.

The glazed eyes of the wife and mother followed every movement of his hand and lip, seeming to read the meaning of each gesture and inspoken phrase.

After a pause of some moments, he said—"The benison for the slain—the ban for the destroyer—the withering curse for the betrayer, are gone up to my father's Gods! Bona of Ilst, art thou ready? shall I uncover the body?"

An upward motion of Vrouwe Bona's hand gave the signal of assent; but as Oost prepared to obey, and while he held a fold of the mantle in his hand, she felt a rush of the heart's sickness in her bosom's depth, and with an imploring look for delay, she nervously grasped his arm. He paused awhile, and the muscles of her face writhed with savage emotion, while she exclaimed in a scarce articulate voice—

"Is it my son?"

"Vrank Van Borselen, Lord of Eversdyke, St. Martyn's-dyke, and Ilst, lives yet in honour and victory," was the firmly spoken reply.

These words acted like a spell. The bound-up floods of feeling were let loose—the tight-strained chords of sensibi-

lity unstrung. Heart, limbs, and senses recovered their power alike, and the rush of the mother's transport—the first of womanly emotions—overpowered all others for awhile. Vrouwe Bona sunk on her knees beside the table on which the husband's stiffened corpse lay clotted with frozen blood, and ere she ventured to lift the covering, she offered a deep outpouring of thanks to Heaven, for the safety of her beloved son.

"Praise to the saints!" exclaimed she, in impassioned energy, and in language that seemed to rise as her nature was elevated by the force of deep feeling; "my boy is safe!—my glorious boy—my best beloved Vrank—my pride, my blessing! Long, long may he live in virtue and fame—the honour of his race, the upholder of their renown! Oh, my heart, my heart, what a weight is removed from off thee now. Thou hadst broken quite, had the shaft of death fallen there.—What wo is to be compared—what anguish is not as bliss to that of the parents who outlive their child! Oh! these warm tears are tears of joy and gratitude, which gush forth unbidden and resistless! He is safe? Praise be to God!—And now!" and at these words she rose up, her tall figure growing more erect with every preceding phrase, "now be for ever dashed aside the mother's weakness and suppressed the mother's joy! Now let my heart grow stern, and my griefs be congealed, and my vengeance gain strength! Deep sorrow and high deeds befit the widow of the noble, the brave Van Borselen. Oost, raise the mantle, that I may gaze on the face of the dead!"

This order was obeyed. The disfigured body of Floris Van Borselen, in the same state in which it was borne from the battle-field, lay exposed to the stern gaze of the widowed dame. As Oost held the cloak like a canopy above it, she looked long and minutely on the convulsed features, and seemed to sound the depths of expiring hatred so terribly marked in the dead man's lip and brow, and to measure the length of the vengeance, which was now the foremost feeling of her own mind. A mixture of womanly tenderness no doubt blended with this, and qualified its violence. The husband of her youth, the father of her children, could not lie gashed and lifeless before her, without inspiring a deep degree of emotion. But she could scarcely

he said ever to have loved her lord, for there was that in him with which love could not coalesce. She had considered him more as a master than a mate. She had married him quite in girlhood, when he was no longer a youth, at the commands of parents, not by the dictates of young affection. She had wept on her wedding day, not tears of nervous delight, whose sources lie in the heart's sympathies, but of bitter grief, at the tyranny which joined her to one in common with whom her heart had no throb. The unbending of his passion for her person had contained no charms for her; while the harshness with which he repressed her fits of girlish gayety, and frowned down the laugh that at times burst from her surcharged breast, seemed to smother the kindly weakness which she yearned to cultivate. He was always, in short, an object of fear and of reverence. She considered herself an appendage to, rather than a part of him. He never deigned to consult her, and had not even the tact to sooth her self-love by a feigned respect.— But with all this she ripened into womanhood by his side as he sank into age. She caught his tone of thought and expression; his habits and his prejudices grew her's by degrees; and she found her thoughts and feelings insensibly in light or shade, warmed or chilled, verdant or withering, in his influence, as a satellite is affected by the varying phases of the planet round which it revolves.

"Oost!" said she, after having contemplated the corpse till a shudder of awe crept through her, "I must now do all that becomes a lorn matron towards her slaughtered lord. And first tell me who did this noble knight to death?"

"Truly, my gracious lady, that were hard to tell.— These several wounds were dealt in the battle's heat.— The hands which sped the shaft or sprung the match-lock are unknown to me."

"And must Floris Van Borselen sink to the grave unavenged?"

"The gods of Friesland forefend! already his fall is paid for by rich and noble blood. The Hoeks are almost to a man destroyed. Zegher Van Hemsted is no more."

"Thanks be to heaven! the warrior's ghost may rest in peace!"

"Best!" cried Oost in a voice of reproach and fury—

"no, no! Bona of Ilst—no rest nor peace can the shade of the warrior know, till vengeance deep and deadly is done on his betrayer. The red hand of the foe is cramped in death—the hot blood of those who struck his life is spilled on the plain and mingled with his own—but the pale dastard who held back relief, whose blighting treachery led to this sacrifice, yet lives—lives for thy lord's atonement, and for our revenge!"

"Son of Radbold, thy words thrill through me, like the storm-gust that shakes the forest. Name the recreant."

"William le Begue."

"It seems as though I have heard that name ere now—who is he?"

"A minion of Duke Philip—the foul channel through which the current of his princely command is made to run.

'Twas he who doomed your husband, your son, the vassals of Eversdyke, the flower of Kabblejaw chivalry to one sweeping ruin, to which the noble Floris was the first and greatest victim."

"Oost, we must seek out the traitor and deal him his reward!"

"Lady, that imploring glance that look of fire is needless to spur me on. The wretch is already dogged to his retreat—I tracked him as a hunter tracks the quarry's steps—through snow and frost, the moon lit-mist and midnight gloom—he is within reach—he lives at our *mercy*!"

A curl of vindictive mockery was on the dyke digger's lip as he pronounced the last words. Vrouwe Bona's responding smile was scarce less terrible.

"Tis enough!" cried she, "even as I have in childhood frolics followed thy faithful guiding through the rocky shores and wood-paths of my native land—even as my son has trusted to thee in the forest depths of Drent—so do I now yield myself to the leading which will bring me to the goal of my vengeance."

"Come, then, lady, quickly, silently, and alone."

"What! even now?—Art sure of thy means? Wantest thou no aid?"

"If I did, 'tis not to be found here—but no, lady—this right arm is sufficient for the deed, which you must witness, and I alone may do."

"Lead me, then, as thou wilt! But first let Heaven

hear my vow in this most awful hour. By this body, on which I thus place my open palm—by the soul of him who is no more—by his unappeased ghost I swear, that never food shall enter my lips, that never sleep shall close my eyes, that hunger shall gnaw and thirst parch up my worn-out frame, till he that has proved traitor to my lord lies dead before me! nor shall this body rest in the cold tomb—but rather rot above earth till legioned worms swarm in the putrid air, and the time-worn walls grow rank in its unburied odour—before the corpse of the betrayer is as fit for the grave as that of him who was betrayed! Cover the body now, and away!”

The bloody cloak, fit pall for a dead warrior, was once more spread upon the outstretched body. And the excited widow left the mortal remains of her lord, unwatched and unwailed, while she hurried to perform the sacrifice harsh to woman's nature, and only forced on her by a barbarian sense of duty. She made Oost quit the chamber first. She closed the door herself, and held in her own keeping the huge key which was not made for lady's hands. Oost, having recovered his torquois, led the way from the castle's gates. Vrouwe Bona followed close, wrapped in her furred mantle, and scorning other preparation for her expedition. As the old seneschal saw her approach the hall he bowed down his hoary head with respect, and a horrid misgiving of the worst; of which he had, however, no positive evidence. His mistress whispered one sentence of command in his ear.

“No one, so may the saints and martyrs be the saving of my soul!” was his solemn reply.

“’Tis good!” said Vrouwe Bona; and quickly and silently passing by the portress, she soon disappeared with her gigantic conductor, in the mist which thickened as the day grew old, as if to wrap their object in a secrecy as profound as it was desperate.

The seneschal and the portress looked around and listened long. But they saw nor heard no sign or sound of the departed pair. How Oost had come, or whither he had conveyed their mistress they did not dare to conjecture. Supernatural terror paralyzed their faculties of intellect as well as sense. At length driven by the cold to their respective places of shelter, the portress sought her nook;

sound of a low-chuckling laugh from above stairs caused him to pause, still holding his fearful weapon high over the head of the sleeper. The lapse of a moment was sufficient to bring a flow of mercy to Vrouwe Bona's heart.—She whispered a command to her terrible companion to spare the wretch; and he, promptly calculating the advantages of an instant ascent to the chamber, from which he heard Bishop Zweder's well-remembered voice, turned instantly away, and followed by the Vrouwe, he strode up the short and narrow staircase which led to a gallery above.

A door lay half-open just opposite the landing-place. Oost saw by its position that it was that of the room whence the light beamed out on the court-yard. He was convinced that it contained the object of his search. During the short pause to give his companion time to reach the gallery, she heard the following phrases in the only language spoken by Le Begue, and of which she just knew enough to comprehend imperfectly its meaning.

"Would that Jacques were come back with the boat or litter! I like not this lonely place—phantoms seem to dance before me—that Kabblejaw chieftain, that savage Frison, are always present to my sight."

"Hut, tut, Governor!" replied Zweder with a re-assuring chuckle, which did not, however, sound quite natural. "Fancy, pure fancy. One is certainly dead, and perhaps the other. All is safe here, and we may every minute expect back the varlet with means of removal."

Oost!" whispered the Vrouwe, "there is no time to lose. Be quick—do the deed!"

A desperate plunge into the room was the echo to this command; and a feeble shriek of terror told the effect produced by the horrid apparition on the nerves of the sick man. Zweder was struck dumb with terror, and seemed as though apoplexy had smote him, for he fell back in the chair which he occupied beside the bed containing his ill-starred companion. A table covered with the materials of a good repast was close by, and the lamp which burned on it, gleamed on the ghastly figure of Le Begue, as he raised his skinny arms and open hands, and sent forth desperate supplications for mercy. Oost neither understood his words nor heeded his gestures. He once more uplifted his

torquois and prepared to strike, when Vrouwe Bona again interposed between him and his destined victim—but not now for mercy's sake!

"Son of Radbold!" exclaimed she, "would'st thou stain a warrior's weapon in the blood of a thing like that?"

Oost felt the appeal, and throwing the club aside, he darted furiously on the prostrate man, while the relentless widow stood by unmoved, and the paralyzed churchman lay half senseless in his chair; the pillows and coverings of the bed became, in the hands of the giant Frison, two terrible effective instruments of the bloodless murder. Not a word was spoken—not a struggle evident—the smothered wretch was dead, ere the spirit might have been thought warned for its eternal flight.

Never was so deep a tragedy so quickly or so coolly perpetrated. There was no action, no declamation, no passion. It had none of the imposing extravagance of romance, but all the cold reality of business. In less time than might seem meet for the arrangement of its plot, the whole was over. Vrouwe Bona and Oost retired from the chamber, descended the stairs, passed through the hall, and from the outer door, regained their boat, and set sail with a propitious breeze, and a bright beam of moonlight, which darted through the mist, as if Heaven had smiled on their savage act. They had scarcely cleared the shore when the expected servant returned with a reinforcement of men and a litter, which served to bear back the lifeless body to the head quarters of the duke and the army.

The horror and surprise occasioned by the spectacle above stairs may be imagined. The drunken servant roused from his sleep, vehemently swore that no living being had entered the hall, and Zweder Van Culembourg recovering from his fit, believed he had been the sport of some horrid dream. The corpse showed no marks of violence. Belief was puzzled; truth confused; tradition left to tell what tale it best might imagine; and history most probably made, as it is too often, the vehicle of fable, while assuming the character of fact.

CHAPTER XI.

THE progress of Jacqueline and her convoy, from Amersfort to Antwerp, afforded no circumstances of adventure of equal interest to the motives and object of the enterprise. She hurried on so rapidly, that no time was given for more than mere flying conjecture; and she travelled in such strict incognito, and even in such personal concealment, that none of her own loyal subjects at the several stopping places knew to whom they furnished lodgings and refreshment; and when she reached the territories she had been wont to look on as jointly hers, she used still greater precautions against discovery. The dangerous illness and hourly expected demise of Duke John was the topic of conversation and conjecture with all whom they came in contact with; and the subject was too engrossing to allow time for suspicion as to who the travellers might be. Lewis of Hainault managed all the arrangements of the journey; and nought occurred to interrupt his unfortunate sister's solemn tone of preparation for the future, or the strain of melancholy thought into which her mind at times so irresistibly relapsed.

We must, however, guard our readers against imagining Jacqueline to have then resembled those heart-broken heroines, of either fiction or real life, whose anguish is uncontrolled by any assuaging power. That she loved Vrank Van Borselen was true, and she deeply deplored his supposed death. But she had known him too little, and under circumstances too painful to all her proud and impassioned feelings, to have become altogether bound up in his destiny, or wholly dependent on his fate. We must even admit that in the midst of her sorrow, there was a counter-acting sentiment of consolation, that she had not absolutely disgraced her name and station, by any irrecoverable advance, towards one who had avowed his repugnance to her cause, and all but condemned her character. She rather rejoiced—but as the chastened spirit rejoiceth in the penance and pain—that she had escaped the temptation which threatened such degrading, yet delicious ruin.—

Viewing Van Borselen in his true light of a political enemy, her junior in years, and inferior in rank, she at times felt that she owed gratitude to Heaven for having saved her from so unsuiting a connexion, and she strove to put up thanksgiving, but the pious fraud was detected and suppressed in her heart, even before her lips could utter it.

"No," thought she, "I cannot thank Heaven for this suffering, but I will bear it without complaint. I cannot believe it to be for the best—but I will make the best of it!" a short sentence, which perhaps combines all that may be expected, by either religion or philosophy.

The travellers reached Mecklin without impediment, and Jacqueline thus found herself once more in the territory of which she had for years been the acknowledged mistress. But now she seemed every where a stranger; exiled from Holland by an invading usurper, she could but view herself as an alien and intruder in Brabant. Ere her chagrin at this double indignity had time to ripen into indignation—the natural sequel in a proud mind—a still worse gradation awaited her. The village of Vilvorde was in sight; the two outriders of the little cavalcade had almost reached its nearest extremity; and Jacqueline and Benina had readjusted their hoods for the purpose of perfect concealment, when a mounted officer approached, reined up his steed, and addressed the courier who had been the bearer of the summons, on which the countess had so promptly—perhaps so inconsiderately acted. The latter of those men, after some suppressed exclamations of surprise at what was whispered him, quickly explained to her the purport of the new message, which was that the Duke of Brabant anxiously expected her arrival in the castle of Vilvorde, (the turrets of which were close in view,) having come thus far for the purpose of meeting her.

At this news Jacqueline involuntarily stopped her palfrey. A pang of suspicion seized her. She felt not for herself; but an instant dread overpowered her, lest she had committed in some way—how, she could not stop to consider—her brother and her friend, both of them peculiarly obnoxious to the hatred of Duke John. Lewis and Benina seemed at the same moment to see the sudden light of the danger, to which they had hitherto been blind, the first from a sanguine indifference to risks, the latter from the stupor

of sorrow, and both from that absorbing attachment to her they followed, which made them insensible to any peril, shared in common with her.

"Meet me at Vilvorde! why, how is this, Sir?" exclaimed Jacqueline. "Can your dying master, my unhappy cousin, be so suddenly revived, as to allow of this removal? You gave note, methinks, that he lay at death's door in Brussels?"

"Noble lady," replied the first messenger, "I told my bidding like a trusty envoy, in strict duty to him who sent me."

"Meet me at Vilvorde! This is passing strange! What then is the Duke's present state, Sir?" said Jacqueline, addressing the last comer.

"In sooth, Madam, 'tis of a mixed and hard to-be defined nature. Some sorrow, much rejoicing, gratitude for the goods in hand, hope for the future, and above all things, infinite pleasure that your gracious highness is so near to his brotherly embrace."

"Brotherly embrace!" said Jacqueline; then turning to Lewis she added, "What think you of this? Are we betrayed?"

"Fair sister," replied he, "it is now too late for thought. If betrayed, may God's curse and mine light on the betrayer! But whether or no, we have now only to bear bravely whatever befalls. Look yonder!"

The objects to which he pointed were nothing less than a troop of armed cavaliers, who now appeared on the high road, coming from two narrow lanes which flanked the chateau.

"Here comes his highness' body-guard to do honour to you, gracious Madam," said the officer, with an ill-repressed smile, its malignant expression being insolently reflected by the other messenger.

"On, on to the castle!" exclaimed Jacqueline, in her natural tone of prompt authority. "Let what may be meant me I shall never be marched a prisoner to the halls where I have been wont to command and be obeyed!"

With these words she pressed her palfry to a gallop, and passed so rapidly up the nearest lane, that the astonished cavaliers composing the guard were thrown into confusion, and could hardly imagine in the intrepid mien and haugh-

ty look of the princess, aught else than the triumph of victory and conquest. While they recovered from their surprise and disorder, and followed the little cavalcade that had swept past, endeavouring to understand the real facts of Jacqueline's situation from the messenger who had accompanied her from Amersfort, she and her attendants had reached the great entrance of the castle court. The porters who stood by, threw back the broad gates, in the usual style of obsequious humility, with which they had been accustomed to receive their dutchess, but it was now the effect of her commanding air, rather than of their spontaneous welcoming.

Jacqueline, assisted by her brother, quickly dismounted from her palfry, and addressing the first of several armed officers of the ducal household, who stood under the entrance-porch, she proudly desired to be conducted to the duke. An interchange of astonished looks passed between the courtiers; but on the command being repeated in a still more determined tone, one stammeringly replied,

"Madam—certainly—I am in attendance to conduct you—but—permit me, Madam—Your imperious bearing, so different—"

"Quick, Sir Chamberlain, if you value your rod of office—lead me at once to his highness's presence—or answer the delay at your peril!"

The chamberlain attempted no further obstacle, but led the way in low-bent courtesy towards the state chamber.—Jacqueline took her brother's arm, and followed with a firm step, (Benina close behind, and her two varlets bringing up the procession,) through files of halberdiers and serving-men, who all seemed lost in wonder at the unexpected scene. Lewis of Hainault, naturally careless of consequences, relying on his sister's superior mind, took in this instance his tone from her. He bore onward, with a look of contemptuous defiance, closely clasping Jacqueline's arm under one of his, and the other supporting his sword, which he was ever ready to draw without calculation as to its chances. Benina, in all things the devoted dependent on her mistress, followed now in this movement of her fast-declining greatness, as shadows follow the forms which move towards the setting-sun.

At the door of the state-chamber, which was guarded

by two men-at-arms, the chamberlain seemed again disposed to hesitate, but Jacqueline, in her highest tone and air, exclaimed,

"Open wide those doors and show me to the presence of the duke!"

The courtier obeyed electrically—the door flew back—and his confused voice muttered imperfectly the announcement of the visitor.

"Her highness, the dutchess—the countess, I should say, Madame Jacqueline of Bavaria, Holland, Hainault—and Brabant," was on the verge of his lips, but a glance from the eye of the chief personage within the chamber, reproved his first slip, and sternly looked a prohibition of a second.

"Let the Countess of Holland and Hainault advance!" said Philip de St. Pol, for it was he that filled the chair of honour, on the high-raised platform that supported the throne. He was surrounded by many of the usual officers of state, and the trappings of feudal sovereignty.—He wore a frown of imperious despotism on his brow; and a black scarf was slung across his richly clad body. A misgiving fluttered Jacqueline's proud heart, and she was conscious of the chill upon her fading cheek. But she was not cast down, nor did her spirit sink one note below the pitch to which she had, within the last quarter of an hour, wound it up.

"What mockery of state is this?" exclaimed she, with a haughty glance round the chamber. "Philip de St. Pol in the chair of government? Where, then, is the Duke of Brabant?"

"Here, most meek and gentle dame, at your good service, and to execute justice on all usurpers and adulterers—no matter of which sex, or of what condition!" answered St. Pol, at the same moment taking the ducal crown from an attendant noble, and placing it on his head.

"Is this indeed so? Is then John of Brabant no more?" asked Jacqueline, with a voice faintly faltering, and eyes filling up, but from far different emotions than any merely personal, the grossness of St. Pol even having failed to affect her.

"My unfortunate brother, more unfortunate in having been your husband, is gone at length to his heavenly re-

ward, victim to your cruel abandonment, and his too great sensibility."

"By Heavens, Philip!" said young Lewis, "if it were not too indecorous in such a case, I could laugh outright at your mummery, as I hold your hypocrisy in scorn, and long to chastise your insolence."

"Hold, gentlemen, on your allegiance!"—

"Forbear, forbear, Lewis, as thou lovest me!"—

Were the simultaneous entreaties of St. Pol and Jacqueline, the one addressing his surrounding satellites; the other, her rashly impetuous brother. The angry nobles were appeased by the orders of their chief, and Lewis of Hainault obeyed the voice that was for him that of an oracle.

"Lewis!" resumed St. Pol; "but that thy blood owns one branch of the source from which mine flows, I would not save it now from the blades that thy treasonous words call from their scabbards. Thy youth, too, pleads pardon for the folly which dubs thee the champion of that woman's crimes."

"Alas! how the heats of power ripen the fruit of a bad heart!" said Jacqueline. "Such was not thy language, Philip, ere that coronet came within thy reach, when thy misguided brother drove me to throw myself on thy championship, and I was by thee proclaimed as innocent as I was injured."

"Madam, I am not here to bandy words, nor can the dignity of the Duke of Brabant stoop to retrace the false compassion of the Count of St. Pol. No matter what I once believed you—'tis enough that I know you now. And that you may know yourself and your true place, I tell you you are here my prisoner, in trust for my well-beloved cousin, Philip of Burgundy, the recent conqueror, by Heaven's grace, as this morning brings me the news, of your usurped possessions, as well as the true heritor of the Earldoms of Holland and Hainault, in the double right of successor to our late uncle, the Bishop of Liege, and of my some hours since deceased brother John, who has to him bequeathed the title acquired by his unlucky marriage with you."

Jacqueline heard this sentence of despotic wrong with a

composed dignity of demeanour that filled all present with uncontrollable sentiments of admiration! and caused a lively feeling of uneasiness even in him who had uttered the flagrant decree. After some minutes' pause, during which she looked steadily, not only at St. Pol himself, but at the individuals who surrounded him, and having thus read the feelings which affected each, she said with a firm tone—

“Duke Philip—since you are indeed a duke—I have listened to your iniquitous speech, and I see the blush of shame on your cheeks. Nobles of more than one province—for I mark the men of Hainault mixed with those of Brabant—I read your remorse in being the tools of this tyranny. I make ye no reproach. I submit to the will of Heaven. I will not utter a murmur that might raise one sword in a hopeless cause. I am, for a season, crushed!—I know how to bend to my fate—but its final result is in the keeping of Providence, and I do not despair! No, so help me, Heaven, and the blessed saints, I am too truly innocent to doubt that my righteous cause will triumph still! 'Tis guilt alone that weeps and wails and gnashes teeth, for it has no hope to hold by, either from man or God. But I am still strong in virtuous confidence; and so being, I neither curse yon hypocrite duke, who has meanly and basely thus led me into his toils, nor do I upbraid you, the tools of his usurping treachery. But solemnly protesting in the face of Heaven and this assembly against the injustice of my doom, and proclaiming aloud my inviolable rights to my dominions of Holland and Hainault, of which I am now forcibly despoiled, as well as of my personal freedom, I resign myself to captivity, and only demand to be at once led to my prison.”

Before the solemn sincerity of this appeal could produce the effect he dreaded on those nobles whose fealty he was not quite sure of, St. Pol replied—

“Few criminals, Madame Jacqueline, fail to proclaim their innocence and protest against the judgment that condemns and the justice that punishes them. The world knows the value of such fertile efforts at imposture. I therefore scorn to answer that part of your appeal. But from one imputation I must free myself, calling witness the noble and loyal men who now surround me. I led you hither by no trick—I have not entrapped you—'tis Heaven's

own hand that has hurried on your destiny. My poor brother, in the last weakness of decay, sent a messenger to call you to him—but this morning nature sunk, and he expired ere your tardy repentance could reach him.”

“God pardon him his faults—and you this impious duplicity!” exclaimed Jacqueline.

“And now one word from me, Philip,” said Lewis of Hainault,—“how comes it, if you were not privy to this plot to entrap my noble sister, that you are here? Why not at Brussels by the still warm corpse of him whose honours you inherit, and whose faults you feign to justify? Your minion who stopped our way said you came here to meet Jacqueline?”

“I am no more bound by the gossip of a subaltern messenger than the prattle of a hot-headed boy. I am here at Vilvorde, in fulfilment of my first duty as chief of the States of Brabant, to take the oaths of installation in my title and sovereignty, and be here proclaimed at the same time that my predecessor’s death is publicly made known, pursuant to the immemorial custom of the country, and of a long untainted line, which God grant I may continue.”

“Stained now, by St. Paul! in your person, too deep for washing out by all who may succeed you,” retorted the passionate youth.

“Treason! treason!” exclaimed several voices—but the new duke rose from his seat and loudly commanded the peace.

“Let the base-born boy rail on!” said he, “he cannot touch my honour more than the foul breath of a stagnant pool may taint the wild flowers on its banks. But to save us all from the scandal of a slanderous tongue, I here pronounce Lewis, Bastard of Hainault, banished from our court and presence to his own castle of Scandœurre, during our good will and pleasure from this moment—so be our ordinance obeyed! And for Madame Jacqueline of Bavaria here present, widow of our late brother and liege Lord John, whose soul Heaven pardon! we now give her up to the due care and custody of our marshal and his familiars, to be removed at once with her attendant beyond the bounds of our dutchy of Brabant, and handed over to the safe keeping of our well-beloved cousin Philip Duke

of Burgundy and Earl of Flanders, in his good town of Ghent—so be our ordinance obeyed. And now let trumpets sound and the heralds speak aloud to the people.—We are ready for the ceremony of installation, and the proclamation of our title and rights!”

The duke, having uttered these commands, descended the throne, and hurried from the chamber, followed by almost the whole of the assembled nobles, and leaving Jacqueline, Lewis, and Benina all more or less bewildered by the rapid sentence that had severally condemned them. Benina was quite depressed: Lewis’s buoyant temperament and overboiling rage kept him in a state of wild excitement: Jacqueline alone was calm and collected, but her heart sank at the idea of an imprisonment in Flanders, a fate which she had ever considered as the consummation of ill-luck.

“’Tis God’s will, brother,” said she to Lewis.

“’Tis man’s wickedness,” replied he, “and with Heaven’s blessing my strong-hold of Scandœurre shall be once more a furnace, to heat the missiles of unsparing war against this incarnate villany!”

“Madam, with your good leave, a close litter and an escort is ready to convey you across the frontier,” said the marshal.

“Across the frontier!” exclaimed Jacqueline, her blood rushing in a flood of indignation to her face—“What! am I then a banished felon from the territory I have ruled, and durst thou, base traitor, address me as such? Is there no sword to avenge this outrage?”

“Is there *not*!” cried young Lewis, drawing his weapon, which would, in a moment more, have infallibly drank the marshal’s life-blood, had not Jacqueline thrown herself on her brother’s breast and held back his arm.

“Oh, God, what have I said!” cried she; “what madness urged me to risk this! Lewis, my dear brother, forbear, forbear; I knew not what I said! ’Tis all right and just—let us bow to Heaven’s judgment! Down, down, insatiate demon of pride—will nothing ever humble thee? be still, hot blood of royal ancestry—throb not within these bursting veins! ’tis well, ’tis well! come, tyranny, and wrong, and misery—pour all your phials on my devoted

head—the pure soul you cannot attain! to thy sentence, Lewis—to thy banishment, my brother! And we, Benina, to our prison! Marshal, I wait your bidding—lead on!

A fast embrace, prolonged convulsively on either side, was the signal of separation between brother and sister. She could have spoken, but would not—for she saw his almost suffocating emotion, and was resolved to spare him the disgrace of those tears which only wanted the utterance of a word to rush in a hot flood from his brimming eyes.

In a very brief space more, Jacqueline and Benina were led away by a by-road towards Alost, in a closely covered litter impervious to the gaze of the curious; while Lewis of Hainault was conducted to his place of exile ere it was known beyond the circle of the castle that he was in the country at all. Duke Philip's installation and proclamation went regularly on without a dissentient voice; and ere night he was established in the palace of his ancestors at Brussels, a sovereign prince—while Jacqueline was lodged in the ancient tower of that of Ghent, a despoiled and destitute prisoner.

CHAPTER XII.

DURING two months of dignified disgrace, Jacqueline remained a state prisoner in the old palace of the Earl of Flanders at Ghent. She was tended with all the honour due to her rank, and all the watchfulness called for by the importance attached to her safe-keeping. Her well known intrepidity and spirit of enterprise made her jailers at first apprehensive of some attempt on her part to elude their vigilance; but the lapse of week after week, without the slightest discovery of such a design, lulled them into security. And so they might have safely remained until death came to relieve her from durance, had an effort at evasion never taken place, till it might originate in her own wishes.

She had no longer an object to beckon her towards freedom. All beyond the prison walls was a blank. Her world was alone within them, her only possessions, purity and strength of mind; her only wealth, the treasures of deep thought; her best enjoyments the reflections of a clear conscience. Her days and nights were passed in a monotony, that would have been intolerable to a being of her temperament, had any stimulus existed in the world from which she was shut out, to lead her mind abroad. But Jacqueline, in her youthful prime, freed from all shackles and restraint by the death of one man, and the abandonment of another, and relieved of all cares of government by the loss of her dominions, felt nothing now of that springy relief, which might be supposed to follow such moral enfranchisement. The fact was that she had not a particle of selfishness in her disposition, and was consequently dead to all enjoyments that flow from solitude and insulation. Hers was rather a mind that yearned for companionship, even though it brought dependence with it. She made light of the labours of government, which tended to the interests of others associated with her own, and she could have borne cheerfully the cares of life, if borne with a yoke-fellow. But joy was no longer such if it came to her alone, and the wings of pleasure had no brilliancy while fluttering above her single head. She had now sunk into a morbid indifference to the evils, as well as to the enjoyments of life; and while in that mood, she would have considered it no blessing had her prison gates flown open, and an angel's brightness lighted the path for her escape.

Benina Beyling understood too well this state of feeling, to attempt to disturb it by any proposal for evasion, though all her own longings after liberty were excited to the highest degree in a very few days after she and her mistress—for such she still acknowledged her—had entered their splendid place of durance. Jacqueline still had friends, desperately faithful to her cause, and solemnly sworn to effect her freedom, or perish in redoubled efforts. The reader who throws a thought back on the various personages of our tale, may enumerate several, we think, likely to become prominent in a cause, which to the heroism of chivalry joined the holiness of sentiment. Jacqueline's imprisonment was widely known throughout Europe; and

while knighthood execrated the tyranny that caused, enterprise was not idle in plans that might end it.

But of all those who pledged their vows and devoted their being to the accomplishment of Jacqueline's deliverance, there was one who took the lead in those active efforts by which it was to be obtained. He, imbued with the spirit of that attachment which, nourished in secrecy, and fed by hopelessness, becomes as desperate in its designs as in its chances, had staked every thing upon one attempt; and when all was ripe, he contrived to make known to Benina the extent of his plan, the names of his accomplices, and the means of her own and Jacqueline's performance of their several parts. But for his own identity he afforded no clue. He sufficiently expressed his zeal in the cause, and proved that it was allied with courage and prudence; but in the written communication which conveyed all this, Benina could only read the devotions of an ardent partizan, without any evidence that might denote any one in particular of the several on whom she strove to affix it.

The notion of recovered liberty was dear to Benina. She had youth, friends, and hopes—all that could give strength to so natural a desire; but such was her devotedness to the mistress she so faithfully followed, that she suppressed every one of her own most cherished motives, and submitted to all the privations of lonely confinement, without even the satisfaction of gaining sympathy for the sacrifice. For she did not make known to Jacqueline, even by a repining look, or a significant word, the pain she endured in imprisonment, or the offers held out for escape. She knew that Jacqueline would have rejected all, in the belief that Vrank Van Borselen was no more. A chance conversation, however, with their keeper's daughter, convinced Benina that the young lord of Eversdyke still survived, and that the terror of the sad story of Brouwershaven had alluded only to the father, but intended no intimation of the fate of the son. Had the latter been Benina's own favoured lover, instead of the object of such vague and mingled sentiments of pain and pleasure to another, she could scarcely have felt more joy than in the assurance of his preservation. But while wishing to give the warm hearted girl full credit for as much disinterestedness as belongs to the best stamp of human nature, we may surmise

that, mixed with her delight on Jacqueline's account, there was a gleam of hope connected with her own. She knew her mistress's secret feelings better than Jacqueline herself, whose forced reserve and resignation had been insufficient to conceal the workings of the secret passion, that had agitated, while it was fed by hope, and now consumed her while linked with despair. Benina was therefore convinced, that when informed of the fact of Van Borselen's existence, Jacqueline would acquire a decided relish for her own; and that her consent to a well devised plan for escape would not be so difficult, when such an object to give value to liberty was discovered, in ever such doubtful or distant perspective.

In these calculations, Benina acted on the unerring instinct of female sympathy, and she proved her sex's tact in tracing the windings of the heart that loves. We must not pause to describe the delicate and dexterous management, with which she first prepared Jacqueline for the intelligence, and finally broke it to her. There was no abrupt disclosure which might shock her feelings, or revolt her pride. She was not subjected to a burst of undignified delight, nor to the risk of a betrayal, which might have thrown back her anger at self-weakness upon the unconscious cause of its display. What Jacqueline *did* feel at the heart-reviving news we choose to leave to our reader's fancy, but there was one point on which she and Benina were thoroughly agreed, namely, the conviction that Vrank Van Borselen was the active champion who so laboured for their escape; and they avoided with mutual reserve all expression of this belief. And on one other point they differed totally. Benina was aware, that to the conviction just stated, and to that alone, was to be attributed Jacqueline's consent to the bold plan of freedom. But Jacqueline, with a delusion common to the strongest minds, persisted in the belief that she could conceal from herself a fact, which every one of her most secret sensations betrayed.

Benina's feelings, however, offered a parallel weakness, which Jacqueline (as all can in another's case,) very easily saw through. It was nothing else but the mysterious and shadowy hope of some time or another meeting again with Lord Fitz-walter that gave the self-cheated girl the

buoyant energy which she displayed throughout the adventure; while she fancied herself worked up to a most philosophically unnatural resignation to the fate of having lost him for ever.

The reader must not now look for the minute details of a successful escape from prison, one of those inspiring instances of courage, sagacity, and good luck, which sparkle in the pages of history, amid the mournful catalogue of battle, murder, and every taint of crime that make the records of human deeds but little more than registers of human weakness and infamy. The chronicles have handed down to us the names of the staunch associates who took the open part in this interesting enterprise, under the guidance of him who was its secret mover and main support.

These were Theodoric Van Merwede, a Hoek of fortune and influence, with two gentlemen named Spiering and Dalberg. These latter boldly ventured into the stronghold, where Jacqueline was confined, and found means to provide her and her faithful Benina with men's suits, in which they safely passed from their palace-prison, while their guards caroused in the false security of supper-time. They traversed the hostile city, not with paltry evasions, but in daring defiance, and did so undiscovered, proving by anticipation the axiom of Irish philosophy, put forward some centuries later, that "the best way of avoiding danger is to meet it plump."* Horses waited at a village close beyond the gates of Ghent; and ere their enemies had time to discover their escape, or they themselves to be astonished at it, Jacqueline, Benina, and her two deliverers had reached the banks of the Scheldt just opposite to the town of Antwerp.

It was lucky that active habits of horsemanship were so familiar to our heroine, and to the faithful friend and companion, who should be in justice associated with almost every word of admiration bestowed on her. Less capable equestrians might have fallen into the hands of those pursuers whom they now happily laughed to scorn; for a boat waited their arrival, floating close to the bank, with the highest level of the tide, which just began to turn, in favouring readiness to waft them to safety. Jacqueline em-

* Sir Boyle Roche, the *beau idéal* of Irish bullism.

barked without any inquiries as to her final destination, or questionings on the one grand object, which she nevertheless burned with impatience to be informed of. Matters of mere worldly import may excite an irritating curiosity, difficult of expression, and even when repressed most painful. But secrets of the heart may remain for a whole season unsolved, yet the mind be able to endure, ay, and even like the suspense, which it has not the courage to exchange for explanation, even though almost sure that it will be one of happiness. So it was now with Jacqueline. All the convictions of reason and feeling, told her that Van Borselen was at hand, and only waiting a safe occasion, on her own suggestion, to become revealed to her. Yet she could not resolve to summon him to her presence, and she felt an undefinable dread at every hour's approach towards the probability of his self-avowal. She knew that his appearance, as her champion, was quite impossible, without the certainty of his ruin, on the territories of Philip of Burgundy, or his congenial ally and namesake, the new Duke of Brabant. While, therefore, she was within the limits of her enemies' possessions, she felt secure against a violation of that spell of morbid anxiety, in which she loved to feel herself bound; and as she approached the district of Holland, where her cause was still unsubdued, and her banner yet afloat, she sank into a state of tremulous delight, like a maiden who longs for, yet dreads, an avowal of the passion which she is prepared to acknowledge and return.

The boat, at length, having safely pursued the track of the river's navigation, arrived at a place on the Dutch bank, in a district, the aspect of which was soon after wholly changed, by one of those watery convulsions to which the soil was so subject in those times. The spot was wild and cheerless; no indication of social life existed, but a rude hamlet of three or four huts, which dotted the plain, where the river's banks were dammed out from spreading desolation over the dreary district. It was the evening of the second day, when the boat reached this distant rendezvous for the appearance of him, who was all along alluded to by the two gentlemen as the main contriver of the plan, which they had so well carried into effect. Jacqueline and Benina lay reclined in the loosely constructed wooden crib, which occupied a portion of the deck, and where cushions

and covering had been provided for their accommodation, and protection against the keen March wind, (which ruffled the temper of old Father Scheldt,) together with habits more suited to their sex, than those used during their escape. Our heroine, whose state of feeling we have before essayed to describe, was absorbed in one of those imperfect reveries so common to such a state, in which reflections on the past are so blended with present sensations and vague imaginings of what is to come, that we can with difficulty affix our moral identity to either of the three tenses, which seem not to divide, but equally to possess it. Benina's feelings had still less of the positive than this—for she did not possess any certainty as to him who formed the ruling topic of her heart; and she was rather the shade of the past, or the fiction of the future, than the being of actual and present impulses.

In this state of feeling, few words were exchanged between the lovely friends; and thus they lay apparently listless, though immersed in mental occupation, when one of their deliverers respectfully opened the door of their retreat, and announced their arrival at the place of rendezvous with their unknown champion. Jacqueline experienced a nervous thrill of agitation, such as she had never before known. The recollection of her two only interviews with Van Borselen rushed together upon her, and as they had both been sudden and unlooked for, she now knew, for the first time, the exquisite and intoxicating pain of premeditatedly coming to a meeting with those one loves. All the conflicts she had endured between feeling and pride for his sake and her own safety, seemed present before her. The part she had now to act became a point of most embarrassing, yet essential consideration; but it was too late.—She could not prepare for the coming scene. On occasions of cold ceremony and formal grandeur, Jacqueline had ever been like other sovereigns, used to rehearse her part, and no one went better through the masquerade of state; but in affairs of the heart she could not assume a character, and impulse was alone her guide. She now, however, strove to summon all her scattered thoughts to their allegiance, and her natural tone of dignity was beginning to bring back her presence of mind, when one of the

gentlemen said, in a half whisper, as though he feared the echoes of the river's bank,

"Madam, he waits to lay himself at your highness's feet."

"He waits! where, Sir, oh! where is he? lead me at once to his presence!" was her hurried reply, in which all incipient-uprisings of personal consequence, were overpowered by the unrestrained effusions of personal feeling.

"He is in yonder hut, Madam," said the gentleman making way for Jacqueline's prompt movement out upon the open deck. Benina followed close; but the gentleman, again said,

"So it suits with your gracious pleasure, Madam, he would wish your first interview to be without witnesses."

"Oh, talk not of witnesses, or delay one minute for courtly forms of speech or action! lead me to him, alone—as he likes—his pleasure is henceforth my law—let me but see my preserver!—Benina! my best friend, thou shalt rejoin me anon."

With these words Jacqueline pressed on to the side of the boat, and stepping lightly along the plank, which joined it to the shore, she was in a moment within the little abandoned hut to which her guide conducted her. He closed the door and remained outside, while she entered; and she had no sooner crossed the threshold and cast her eyes within, than she saw rush towards her, and throw himself on his knee at her feet, the fine figure of Lord Fitz-walter.

She looked on him for one moment of gaping astonishment. Her quick eyes next ran through the small apartment's space—then fell back again on the agitated and glowing countenance of the prostrate nobleman—and finally upturned towards Heaven, and closed in an involuntary pang of anguished disappointment.

"Oh God, it is not he!" was the deep-felt thought of sorrow, which spoke only in the sigh heaved from her bosom's inmost depth.

Fitz-walter still kept his eyes fixed on her, as her face was turned from him and covered with her hands—that dubious attitude, so natural to so many widely-varied emotions. Fitz-walter could not read its present meaning; and he may be pardoned, if, in the warmth of his own feelings,

he somewhat mistook it. He caught Jacqueline's robe in his trembling grasp, and with an air of suppliant and insinuating humility, exclaimed,

"Ah, Madam! may I then read in this silence—this emotion—this surprise, pardon for my boldness in daring to become the means of saving you from harm, of restoring you to the world and your country? will an angel's voice deign to pour on mortal ear the blessed sounds?"

Low and broken sobs—the unconscious vibrations of a deeply-wounded heart—were Jacqueline's only reply. Her hands slightly shook as she pressed them to her face—but her body moved not—it neither sank down nor grew rigidly fixed, it appeared quite insensible and unaffected by the shock. The whole suffering seemed of the soul, and that was agitated to its depths.

And what was Fitz-walter's infatuation? was it that, blinded by his passion, cherished so long and so secretly, and in circumstances so wildly romantic, he was really deceived into the belief that Jacqueline's agitation was the result of tenderness taken by surprise? Such was indeed his self-engendered deception! And he who had been for years the humble, the hopeless worshipper of an idol, adored in a secrecy which he would not venture to violate even to himself, became now, in the crisis which was enough to daunt the most impetuous lover, gradually bold, ardent, and for a moment almost confident.

"Oh, most noble, most enchanting of women!" exclaimed he, catching the hand that had dropped listless by Jacqueline's side—"In what words may I pour out my soul before thee! How give utterance to my boundless adoration."

There was no mistaking language like this. Had Jacqueline hovered on the grave's verge, instead of being merely plunged in mental stupor, this would have awoken her to new life. She read in one moment the whole truth of Fitz-walter's feeling for years past, and saw, with a regret far outweighing any feeling of vanity, the delusion which had so blinded Benina Beyling to them. She drew back her hand as though from infection's touch; and her astonished looks fell down on the face, which so eloquently sent up the pleadings of devoted admiration.—

Fitz-walter neither felt her movement, nor saw her looks in their true light. His mind was filled with the ideal divinity of hers, so as to rob him for a while of the less pure though more keen-sighted perception of sense; and he continued to pour forth the overflowings of his heart, in language more suited to such a worship, than to the actual avowal of flesh and blood passion. And it was for this reason, perhaps, that Jacqueline heard him out with patience, and without emotion. Had he pressed on her, with the burning fervour of such a passion as carries bliss to the bosom which returns it, and disgust to that which does not, Jacqueline had assuredly stopped him short, revolting from what would in such a case have shocked her. But all he now said and looked fell as chaste and vapoury on her mind, as a lecture on metaphysics to a blooming girl, or a mathematical treatise to an overboiling boy.—The particulars of his speech may be known from Jacqueline's reply.

"I have heard you, my lord," said she, "God knows with gratitude—but not with even as much of that calm sentiment as you merit at my hands. More I cannot give, and will not assume. Let me then answer you decisively and briefly, nor blame a conciseness which springs not from insensibility, but from the apathy of a too acutely-feeling and half-broken heart. You implore me to pardon you—you talk of presumption, while you give me the deepest proof of generosity, and far too flattering tokens of attachment. I cannot forgive when you could not have offended—you cannot be presumptuous, where, alas! fate has levelled all distinctions! Despoiled, destitute, and abandoned, on whom may Jacqueline of Bavaria—no more of Holland, Hainault and the rest look down? Who is more poor, more lowly in the scale of the cold world's calculations? No, Lord Fitz-walter, I am but your equal in those distinctions which justify alliances—I am free from all ties which might throw a bar between such an union as you offer, and which I might without dishonour accept. But cogent reasons exist to render it impossible.—In the first place, my marriage with a foreigner below the rank of royalty would so outrage the feelings of my Dutch and Zealand subjects—my subjects! alas! alas! when shall I learn my real position—when clip the wings

of those eagle-pinioned thoughts that were wont to bear me towards the sun's blazing front!"

A pause of some moments followed this out-burst of unperishing ambition. Jacqueline struggled, strongly and successfully, to calm her perturbed feelings; but they left their glow on her cheek, and her eyes beamed with the flickering fire of unquenched pride. Fitz-walter, who had risen from his kneeling posture, and stood before her, (catching every word that fell, as a culprit might watch the sentence that dooms to life or death,) durst not interrupt her eloquent silence or the energy of her words.—The effect of both was already working in his breast.—The warm flood of sentiment, in which it erewhile felt as if afloat, was becoming gradually congealed, as though a cold air blew by magic on the surface of some sunny lake, and froze it in the very prime of summer.

Jacqueline resumed.

"No, my lord! my ruined partizans, my native friends, my former servitors, would feel themselves degraded in what they would consider my humiliation; and no personal wish for peace, protection, or even happiness, could justify or make me consent to give one faithful Hollander a moment's pain. And how could I accept your next alternative, a residence in England, the mistress of your wide domains? Dare she, who has lived an equal in your late sovereign's court, who held your present infant monarch at the font, and answered to holy church his god-mother in baptism, appear in the proud realm of England as a private person? Would it either be just to you, that your wife should skulk in privacy and do dishonour to your rank? But these objections aside, could I condescend ever to press again the land that holds *him* who rejected my alliance for an ignoble wanton, and who forsook the cause he swore to die for, leaving you and his other gallant countrymen to pay the sacrifices of his baseness? These reasons were enough, methinks, to show you the impossibility of my consent. But still one more exists, greater than all the rest. For, such as I am now, there is but a single motive which could make a union with me of worth to any honourable man—my heart. That is no more in my command—'tis for ever lost to me, but not, alas! to enrich another—squandered in hopeless rashness—with

nought acquired in return! I have spoken; yet no flush mantles to my brow—my bosom does not throb—my eye is not full. I make not this spontaneous confession at the shrine of pride, nor do I speak for shame's sake; but to show you in the calm expression of my looks and voice, that all is desperate for me as it is hopeless for you!"

Fitz-walter heard patiently every word of this harangue; but the conclusion struck to his heart. He had seen during its progress, with sensitive conviction, that Jacqueline's affections were not for him, but he had no previous notion that they were really given to another. He had hitherto feared no rival but Gloucester; who, once removed by his own perfidious weakness, left Fitz-walter in the belief that he acted in an open field. But there was now in Jacqueline's manner a decision that spoke stronger than a volume of reasoning, against the hope he had derived from her misfortunes, and her widowhood; and he at once saw and submitted to the truth, with the conviction, which strikes one waking in the broad blaze of day, from some delicious dream of moonlit-phantasy.

The composure with which he acknowledged his conviction, was the effect of the reality of feelings which he had completely mistaken, but which we shall soon explain. His only difficulty in comprehending the sentence just pronounced was that of reconciling his notions of Jacqueline's high character with her having given him so lightly the favour, which he had so long and faithfully worn, and her having so loosely alluded to it on several subsequent occasions. It was true that a token of tournament gallantry was not considered a binding pledge of affection for ever and aye; but it acquired solemnity from the long lapse which had intervened; and his constant wearing of it was, at least, enough, he thought, to have prevented any truly candid mind from feigning amazement at an avowal of love from one who had so proved his constant admiration. Thus embarrassed, he took the faded kerchief from his bosom, and said,

"Countess, you have roused me from a vision of mistaken hopes—I bow to your decree, and place at your feet the token which I have so long considered sanctified, as having come from you. I give back your favour, pure and unsullied."

This circumstance too strongly reminded Jacqueline of another, so similar as to revive an anguish she had been endeavouring to keep out of sight. But seeing the fact of Fitz-walter's error, she made, for Benina's sake, an effort at composure that she could not have accomplished for her own.

"This, Lord Fitz-walter," said she, "is but error heaped on error—that favour was never mine!"

"Not yours! It came from your pavilion at the tourney of Windsor. It is your colour. Not yours!" exclaimed Fitz-walter, in accents of incredulity.

"It was my dear Benina who bestowed it, and with it the proudest meed to a brave man, the heart of a beautiful and virtuous woman!"

"Her heart?" said Fitz-walter, betraying by tone and look his involuntary satisfaction at the idea of so proud a recompense for his disappointment, so soothing a salve for his disgrace.

"Ay, verily, my Lord, her heart, whole, innocent, and better worth than that you dreamt of erewhile. Ah! did you but feel the value of that treasure, yours all unknown to you, you would see nought to be compared to it, nor cast it aside in the vain pursuit of a phantom, which fled as you followed! Yes, my lord," continued Jacqueline, following up in successive attacks the impressions which she saw working in his silent agitation, "'twas, indeed, the favour of Benina Beyling which graced your helm in many a tilt and mêlée of war; and well might the type of a heart like her's inspire such prowess as was ever yours. Benina, my lord, is one of a race of old and proud nobility—artless, yet high-minded—and passionately, while purely, attached to him who has taught her to love without offering a single lesson! What a triumphant conquest have you made, Lord Fitz-walter! How flattering to your best feelings! And where could you find so lovely, so devoted a mistress? What gratitude do you not owe for such an attachment—what dishonour to disavow the flame you have, even though unwillingly, fanned and fostered! Be-think you, my Lord, of all your complicated causes to honour and cherish this charming girl!"

"Countess," exclaimed the Englishman, with much emotion, "you touch my tenderest feelings—you probe my

heart—you raise my self-love, you soothe my wounded pride! Oh! how angel-like you beam upon me in that new aspect of perfection! How, oh! how can I give one thought to aught but thy amazing excellence? How ever replace with another thy image, so long throned in my breast?"

"My Lord, my Lord, this must not be; 'tis based on fiction—'tis as unreal, as Benina's feelings and your duty towards her are full of life and truth. She, Lord Fitz-walter, you never loved! Nay, start not, nor raise your hands and eyes in bootless appeal to Heaven—you never *loved* me! Ingrate I were, and worthless of your esteem, did I doubt the attachment which you have proved so long and so well. Chivalric and noble it has been—but 'twas not love. Dazzled by my rank, my adventures so marvellous, perhaps by qualities which bounteous Heaven has given me for its wise purposes, but wo is me! not yet for my own happiness, you fancied that you loved, while you but admired, compassionated, it may be said revered me. This is not love, my Lord. Ah, no! Love is no solitary passion, that broods in a lone breast. It is gendered in two bosoms, which throb alike in wo or weal, and sink or rise in common. To love, we must be beloved. An idol may be adored, human or mortal, in reverence and without return; but that absorbing passion of the soul, worthy the name of love, exists not till heart combines with heart, and both are linked by a bifold chain of sympathy, which joins them through all time and the utmost bounds of space. This was not our case, my good Lord—therefore you loved me not!"

Fitz-walter showed strong impatience to combat Jacqueline's theory; but she barred all reply by hurrying to another section of her thesis, ere the listener had quite recovered from the effect of her touching, and almost solemn delivery of that she had just finished.

"But if, in your heart's error, you mistook one sentiment for another, believe me, Lord Fitz-walter, a deep tendency was working unawares, to lead your mind to that true tone of co-existing passion. Albeit unknown to you, your affections were running on with those you deemed yourself to have no share in. The hours you have passed with Benina were not without fruit. You thought it was my interests you watched over, my projects you discussed. Ah,

'twas that nameless attraction that love alone creates, which brought you so often, and kept you so long beside her. Her young affection all untold, and to herself almost unknown, was the cynosure that guided that occult and mystic course, my Lord, which every mortal heart must own, even in its own despite. Lord Fitz-walter nature and fate have destined you to love Benina Beyling."

Here Jacqueline resolved to complete the effect of these oracular sophistries by a dramatic stroke of living argument; and with this view she turned towards the little casement, and by pointing out, attracted Fitz-walter's observation to the figure of Benina, standing on the deck, and looking with keen solicitude towards the hut; and while his eyes rested on the blooming face and graceful figure, Jacqueline resumed—

"See there, my Lord!—Look at her where she stands! Is not that beauty, grace, and innocence enough to make you happy? And could you, in the pride of manly conquest, doom such a being as that to pine in hopeless suffering under your abandonment? Ah, Lord Fitz-walter, how enviable to have won without pain such a trophy as that, which might do honour to a monarch's throne! Take her, my Lord—she is yours for ever and ever. I give her to you in all her charms—wear her in your heart, and may Heaven crown you both with unfading joy!"

Before the half bewildered and wholly gratified Fitz-walter could utter a reply, or interfere either to aid or prevent the movement, Jacqueline had thrown open the door, and beckoned Benina towards her. She, at the summons, flew along the plank to the shore, and was in a moment at the hut's entrance, where Jacqueline stood to receive her. But when stepping aside, she revealed Lord Fitz-walter, standing and gazing, as if fixed unresisting under a magic spell, a shriek of overpowering joy burst from the astonished girl. Sight, hearing, and all the subordinate faculties of sense were for a moment paralyzed. Fitz-walter could not—as but few men could—resist the too eloquent appeal of one of nature's master pieces, thus paying homage to his influence. He caught her to his breast, and strained her to him in a tender violence, that owed its impulse to one of the strangest moods in which man ever bound himself for life and death, for better for worse, soul,

body, and substance, to a deoting—and must we add, a deceived—woman? But if this was betrayal, who could wish for truth? If this was not happiness, who would not pant for misery? The delighted victim, so deliciously deceived, never knew that she was so. Neither as Benina Beyling, nor as Baroness Fitz-walter,—during her few days' delay of smiling celibacy in Holland, nor for long years of wedded enjoyment in England, did she once suspect that her lord had been ever less her lover than she now believed him, or that she owed her long career of bliss to the generous advocacy of her dearly loved mistress.

And Fitz-walter himself, recovering to the true delight of such a lot, could scarcely believe in the ambitious vision of earlier days, or bring himself to doubt that he had not all through, with fervour and faith, been the impassioned lover of her to whom he made so fond, so faithful, and so happy a husband.

CHAPTER XIII.

No sooner had Jacqueline accomplished the object, so near her heart, of compromising Fitz-walter in the fact of his own and Benina's happiness, and of having them indissolubly united, by means of the nearest priest, than she turned her whole attention to the design for her personal conduct, which she hastened to execute as quickly as it was conceived.

Jacqueline saw that she had now no rational ground of hope, on the only point which made even hope—the day-star of the heart—worth having. Stunned rather than wounded, in her recently exalted feelings, a moral trance seemed gradually to gain on her faculties of thought. She dreaded a total atrophy of mind, and she hurried her project, ere the power of action might be finally destroyed. Theodoric de Merwede had not been tardy in joining her

and Fitz-walter at the appointed place of rendezvous; and these two bold counsellors—the latter inspired by a new principle of devotion to her cause—did not fail to urge a daring effort on her part, to rally the scattered Hoeks, who still held their ground under Van Monfoort in Friesland, and make one desperate struggle for recovery of what, as they courageously argued, was not all lost. But this advice so consonant to Jacqueline's former character and conduct, now made her sicken with disgust. Power had no longer any charms to captivate her ambition; her mind was bent on the abandonment of every dream of greatness, and a close retirement into the seclusion of private life; but not in the expectation of finding happiness even there. He who could have made a peasant's hut a paradise, no longer lived for her—and thoughts even of *him* were now intolerable. Her only hope was in forgetfulness of what she was, or might have been.

Examples in abundance were not wanting to teach our ill-fated heroine the philosophy of a submission to partial, in time to save the infliction of complete ruin. But it was a deeper-seated impulse than the mere exercise of reason that now ruled the destiny which Jacqueline courted, rather than obeyed. She hurried on Benina's marriage, which was effected, ere the latter could believe in the reality of its approach; while Fitz-walter had scarcely time to repose from the tumult of his late excitement, in the new-found happiness which became his without an effort, and as he almost confessed without a title. No sooner, was the nuptial knot tied, and Benina had become a bride, safe beyond the prevention of man's caprice or mortal accident, than Jacqueline insisted on the newly-joined couple repairing direct to England, leaving her to her inevitable lot.

We need not dwell on the mutual pain of such a separation between friends so reciprocally tried and proved.—But the power of endurance, which kind Heaven bestows in every stage of mortal suffering, was now balanced between both, fairly in point of its effect on the mere pang of parting, but most sadly unequal in relation to the healing compensation which it brought to either mind.—For while Benina's individual happiness softened the blow, Jacqueline's apathy made her less susceptible to it. But

who would value the exemption from pain purchased at the price of insensibility to joy? Those who would, cannot justly understand the desolate suffering of Jacqueline.

Philip of Burgundy was at this period with part of his army before Gonda, the only town of any importance in Holland which still kept Jacqueline's banner flying on its towers. Thither she repaired, in spite of all the entreaties to the contrary of her few faithful followers; and there, to the amazement of her inveterate despoiler, she presented herself before him, unattended as she was unexpected, and voluntarily offered terms of submission to his tyranny, which he could scarcely have obtained by the utmost success of a protracted struggle. In the readiness with which she entered on this treaty, and submitted to his exactions, his wily mind could see nothing but treachery and trick, and it was not till all was concluded that he could believe in the sincerity of motives, which he could not feel, and even, if believing, could not comprehend, like some of the mysteries of the faith he professed, without practising. We have passed over details of the hopeless contest, which was awhile maintained in several districts, where obstinate fidelity to Jacqueline was punished with all the force of irritated tyranny. The towns of West Friesland, Waterland, and other districts, not only paid enormous contributions to the coffers of the rapacious conqueror, but they lost their banners and privileges; and his general treatment of the whole of Holland at this epoch was so arbitrary, as to lay the foundation of the yoke which it bore for above a century under the house of Burgundy, and then only finally escaped from by a general revolution and forty years of war.

The negotiation entered into by Jacqueline with Philip under the walls of Gonda, followed by a treaty signed at Delft, recognized him as all but absolute master of her former states. He certainly allowed her to retain her titles of Countess of Holland, Hainault, Zealand and Friesland. But she appointed him her ruward, or lieutenant, named him her heir, and consented that the nobles and the corporations of the towns should do him homage, and swear allegiance to him in those capacities. These and the other necessary articles of the treaty were, however, of slight importance, in comparison to the main one, by which Jac-

queline pledged herself to the hard and humiliating condition that she would never marry without Philip's full consent, a condition considered by herself and her friends, as well as he who framed it, as tantamount to a sentence of perpetual celibacy.

Had the usual chances of life been weighed in a fair balance, Philip could have scarcely reckoned on surviving his unfortunate cousin, so many years his junior. But the laws of Nature seemed in this respect to have been already frequently suspended in his favour, and fortune as well as fate had stamped him as its especial minion. Succession after succession had dropped into his grasp, and all in whose life he had an interest, or by whose death he was to be a gainer, seemed to have taken an unnaturally early measure of their graves. Philip was probably then justified in calculating on his survivorship of Jacqueline, for whose even nominal sovereignty he panted with an insatiable longing; and to make his accession to it as secure and as speedy as possible, no means appear to have been left undone, to render her new career so desolate as to break down her proud spirit, and make it long for the enfranchisement of the body's death. Philip's first care, however, was to have every possible solemnity fulfilled, the omission of which might vitiate, even partially, his claims to the virtual sovereignty she ceded.

A tour of forced and melancholy partnership was now undertaken by the sovereign countess and the lieutenant who was to reign over her. They visited together all the principal towns of Holland, accompanied by a numerous train of courtiers and attendants, not one of whom was of Jacqueline's choice or in her confidence. Fêtes and rejoicings went on with all their usual brilliant hypocrisy; and town after town was illuminated merely that the people might be kept in the dark. But the mass were not on this occasion to be deceived, either by the ostentatious condescension of Philip, or the forced cheerfulness of Jacqueline. Deep and bitter heart-burning gnawed her discomfited friends. It was in vain that the clause of the treaty, which declared sunk for ever every nominal epithet of party-hatred, was ratified and proclaimed by common consent.—Hands were grasped and shaken, and embraces exchanged with mock cordiality, which told the keen observer that

the parties only thus signed a manual treaty of everlasting hatred.

But Jacqueline had done her duty towards her country, and having done so she hastened to complete her self-sacrifice. To give her an excuse for the solitude to which she had doomed the remainder of her days, she chose to have herself named, by her own and Philip's joint authority, grand-master* of the forests, (violating the distinction of genders,) not only in her own nominal territories, but in those districts to which he had still unsettled claims. To this place was attached a salary of seventy nobles a year ;† and historians who have not reflected on Jacqueline's character, or her peculiar motives at this period, are astonished that she could have voluntarily courted such a humiliation, which few of her former vassals of any rank would have condescended to submit to. Our readers, however, will easily comprehend, and sympathize with, her ardent longing for retirement, and that desire of an uncontrolled right in the wide range of the woods, which at this period covered the face of whole districts, that are now so many miracles of culture reclaimed from their savage state.

Jacqueline hastened to take possession of the old castle of her ancestors at the Hague, which had at this time grown from a mere hunting-lodge, built by the early Counts of Holland, into a splendid residence suited to princes, who held their rank with royalty, and ruled over an independent realm.

No motives of latent pride, no heavings of lulled ambition, betraying by its convulsive swell the storm which had raged in its victim's breast, induced Jacqueline to choose the residence of her former state. Far from attempting any imitation of what that had been, she retired into the strictest privacy. She retained not one of the crowd of func-

* Jacqueline was extremely masculine in her acts of state. Her great seal bore the name of *Jaques* not *Jacobe*, on the legend; but in this defiance of genders she was not singular in history. Mary, the eldest daughter of Louis, King of Hungary, in the fifteenth century, was declared *king*, that warlike nation despising the notion of being governed by a *queen*; and Isabella, daughter of Philip II. of Spain, long governed Belgium with her husband, Albert, by the joint title of *Arch-dukes*, nor did she exchange hers to the feminine even in her widowhood.

† About £24. sterling.

tionaries which had heretofore swarmed in her household. Almost all the great officers were suppressed, and the necessary instruments of government, who still kept their employments, were removed to other towns. Jacqueline, in short, buried in the depths of her palace, deprived of her suite, and inaccessible to visitors, was rarely seen beyond the precincts of the magnificent wood which adorned the neighbourhood, and on the verge of which the outbuildings of the castle commenced.

There, indeed, she might be often observed walking alone, in the mechanical impulse of an active constitution, seeking the mind's relief in the body's exercise; or seated beneath the branches of some proudly-spreading member of the forest's aristocracy,* moralizing on the analogies between human and inanimate nature, the factious gradations of rank, the mysteries of bloom and decay; or profoundly examining the workings of her own heart, and retracing the passages of her chequered and most unfortunate career. She occasionally wandered beyond the extremities of the wood out into the open plains, and in the pastoral scenes beyond; but she never felt her brow or heart contracted with envy at the aspect of the world's loveliness, or the peaceful joys of the ignorant and innocent beings with whom Heaven had peopled it. She was known even more than once to have been led away by the natural bias of her social and benevolent temper, to join with some rustic groups of villagers whom she thus fell in with by chance; in the practice of the arbalette, at which we have shown her to have been a distinguished adept. It is even recorded that on one of those occasions she carried away the prize, and while she submitted to be crowned with a garland of may-flowers and proclaimed the queen of the sports, and held forth her hands to receive the floral presents showered on her by the village maids, the tears she involuntarily shed were not bitter from the memory of a day of prouder, yet more fallacious triumph; but they sprung rather from one of those deep sources of delight, which overflow in the virtuous breast at the sight of others' joy. Jacqueline was used on some occasions to mount a

* A large and venerable tree in this wood still bears the name of Jacqueline's tree.

favourite palfry, and quite unattended but by one old and tried domestic, named Gobelin, instead of the troop of pages, chamberlains, and grooms, who formerly composed her train, she used to give a loose rein and urge forward to the downs that stretch to the sea-shore, where for hours she might be seen by the straggling wood-cutters who lingered on the forest's skirts; galloping in long courses or wide circles over these desolate wilds, unconsciously rousing the timid hare, or driving the fox and coney to their earths, or breaking on the hawk's glutton-feast, and rescuing some fluttering victim from his talons. And then, when her steed required breathing-time, or she was fatigued with this mockery of by-gone sports, the lazy fishermen stretched on the sand-hills of the beach, or those who returned in their little skiffs from hours of seaward labour, might see her as she sat unmoving in the saddle, or stood on the shore, her eyes fixed on the waves, while the fresh breeze sent her long hair streaming away behind, and painted her cheeks with a temporary bloom, which thought and sorrow as quickly caused to fade.

There is not, in short, a spot in the environs of the Hague, where the wild and beautiful of field and wood is close joined with the sublime of ocean, that is not consecrated for the enthusiast in the cause of suffering woman, by some traditionary token, or by imagined associations still more strong and more delightful.

Month after month passed in this way, and Jacqueline was gradually sinking into the worst consequences of entire seclusion from the world. She insensibly lost all those tastes and habits of thought and action which form the brilliant advantage of social life. She saw no one from abroad; received no letters but from her mother, who had retired to Germany, and Lady Fitz-walter, who now constantly lived in England; and strictly prohibited the mention of all topics of a public or external nature, wholly confining herself to acts of charity in the surrounding districts. In this respect alone her expenditure knew no retrenchment; all applicants were profusely supplied. Wherever poverty or age asked alms, relief was granted, without any of those scrupulous qualms of the over-righteous, who draw their purse-strings closer from fear of giving to an unworthy object. She was no doubt often and

often imposed on, but the pleasure of relieving one real object repays the mortification of being deceived by a dozen impostors. The old domestic before named, who was now the distributor of her bounty, knew not the extent of his beloved mistress's privations, nor imagined the possibility of her means being circumscribed. It was not, therefore, wonderful, the mistress being generous to excess, and the man improvident without bounds, that the scanty means at the disposal of both should be soon utterly exhausted. Jacqueline was confounded with surprise, when this was beyond doubt evident. It seemed the very excess of disgrace. She felt as though at length hunted down by the merciless assaults of Fate. She could fly from it no further. Her haughty and harassed spirit stood at bay.

In this crisis, Jacqueline would have lain down in utter despair sooner than have recourse to any undignified or undeserving means of relief. Her arrears of stipulated income would in some measure have met her wants, but she scorned to ask them of the harsh usurper, who was only niggard on the occasions when profusion would have been a virtue. The faithful Gobelin was not so delicate as his mistress, but made anxious, although vain applications for the accumulated arrears. Baffled in the search for justice, he next tried what generosity might produce; but of all the nobles who had been, in Jacqueline's prosperity, her devoted vassals and partizans, there was not one to whom he applied for aid, that did not by some plea of poverty refuse compliance. Our heroine was, in short, at the expiration of a year, and notwithstanding all her sacrifices, and the shifts of her faithful follower, reduced to the extremity of inconvenience, if not of personal want.

One resource remained to her—an appeal to the people, whose friend she had ever been, and who were ever ready to lavish their treasure and their blood for still less holy purposes than those which Jacqueline was now debarred from effecting. But she would not condescend to let her wants be publicly known, nor consent to wring from the hard hands of industry and toil, a single contribution; a claim for which might be misconstrued or defamed.

In utter despair of any succour from either his own, or his mistress's resources, old Gobelin determined to sum-

mon the advice, at least, of him whom he knew to be the very staunchest and most unswerving of all Jacqueline's former friends—one who, while others had left her to her fate, and flocked in swarms to court the favour of Philip, scorned every abandonment of her whom he could no longer serve, and whom he was debarred from ever seeing, and who, sooner than bow the knee to usurpation, had remained self-banished in his lonely isle, feeding his fierce regret, and brooding over plans of unformed, and perhaps impracticable vengeance.

A safe messenger found his way to Urk with Gobelin's summons; and, in as short a time as could be sufficient for the journey, Ludwick Van Monfoort was in the halls of Jacqueline's gorgeous, but most desolate palace at the Hague.

The interview which immediately followed was abrupt on the part of him who sought, deeply painful to her who granted it, and little likely to produce the result so desired by the one, and so necessary to the other. Van Monfoort was reduced to straits still narrower than Jacqueline, and was quite unable to give her any assistance beyond a species of advice, which in the first instance she rejected with a thrill of wounded pride. This was simply that she would allow him to repair on the spot to the castle of Teylingen, at four leagues' distance from the Hague, and one beyond the town of Leyden, to make an application for her arrears of promised income, to the Count of Ostervent, the lately appointed stadtholder, or governor of Holland; in virtue of the powers assumed by Philip of naming a deputy lieutenant under himself, independent of her from whom he derived his own title.

"Never, Van Monfoort!" exclaimed Jacqueline, with a deep glow of shame, and somewhat of resentment. "No! let me perish rather than submit to this lowest depth of humiliation! Can I, who scorn to demand my right from Philip of Burgundy, stoop lower still, and ask a favour from his upstart minion? And who is this insolent stadtholder that dares to come so near my residence, and fix in the very heart of the forests, over which my recognized title of grand-master, gives me sole right of range? The Count of Ostervent! What new-sprung pretender to nobility is he? I know of no such title."

"Madam, he is one of those Kabblejaw chiefs promoted in the ranks of Dutch nobility, in right of service done to the tyrant during these luckless wars. But little, methinks, it boots us now to trace his pedigree. He is the newly named sub-governor of this unhappy country, your highness's oppressed dominion, Philip's usurped spoils. That is enough. He is the fit-existing source from which to draw your stipend. 'Tis said he is honest, and not disinclined to render you all honourable service suiting his notions of right. I am, as your highness knows, a blunt man; and I think you ought to sanction my demanding what is your due, from him who is your debtor's agent. Such is the plain counsel of Ludwick Van Monfoort."

Jacqueline remained for some minutes without replying to this speech. It had started a whole host of hidden and half buried feelings, which now ran riot through her brain, or strove to hide still deeper in her heart, like the wild tenants of the wolds which her horse's hoofs roused to flight, or frightened into concealment. The word Kabblejaw had left its print deep in Jacqueline's memory, but had not, for more than a year, been mentioned to her ear. Gobelin, and the two or three women who were alone suffered to approach her, had never dared to utter the forbidden sound. But the plain-speaking sincerity of Van Monfoort made light of the prohibition, which he saw good cause for disregarding.

"Ludwick Van Monfoort," said Jacqueline, at length, "it was not well done of thee to rouse the recollection of days which it were well for me had never dawned, and of persons, who, had Heaven been kind to me, had never been born. Thou knowest not, perhaps, that I have forbidden those topics for ever. Dead to the world, I must restrain all mention, if I cannot smother all memory, of the past, as I cherish no phantom hopes for the future."

"Heaven and the Saints forfend! By the bones of your buried ancestors, Madam—by the glory of your race, I swear you shall revive and flourish still! What! think, you, then, that I and some few staunch friends are yet above earth for nought?—that the burning spirit of Hoekism is laid at rest?—that usurping tyranny shall walk the land, and trample for ever on the good old cause?"

"No more, no more, I command thee!" cried Jacque-

line, interrupting the fierce chieftain. . "As you value my peace, or honour my privacy, no more of this! Oh, God! when will this blood run cold, when will this heart lie still! Van Monfoort! you have done me great harm—I tremble and throb with feelings I had believed dead!"

"But which cannot, which shall not die, till the race you spring from is extinct! And is it to expire with *you*, Madam? Is the blood of twenty-five sovereigns to be frozen forever in such veins as yours? Is the heroic race to stop with her, whom nature has formed in all ways fitting to prolong it to the latest time? Not so, not so, my gracious and honoured lady—you will revive from this torpid state to new life and long enjoyment. Nay, Madam, interrupt not your old vassal and best friend—God's grace be on us! Is it to be thought of that one so young, so beautiful, so full of life, and so formed to be loved and loving, should pine away, matchless and heirless as an old sap-dried thing like me? Are you, blooming and beautiful as you are, to have been three times spoused, and yet not once?—Forgive me, I beseech you, my mistress; but I am roused to fury at the thought of your disappointments, and the sight of your wrongs!"

Ere Jacqueline could collect the thoughts so loosely scattered by this honest outburst, and before Ludwick had time to finish the intended harangue, of which this was but the proem, an interruption took place, that led to his purpose more effectually than any possible prologue he could have uttered. Old Gobelin entered the room, with more than his usual briskness, and even less than his usual want of ceremony. He carried a letter in his hand, which he held out to Jacqueline.

"From your lady mother, Madam," said he, "and the Saints be good to us, but her highness has accompanied her letter by a brave present. Look, Madam—look, Heer Van Monfoort, from the casement down on the court! Is not that a sight to glad the eyes of the most subtile cavalier that ever curbed steed, or rode in tourney? Look, look!"

While Jacqueline tore open the missive, with the impatience natural to those feelings of filial affection; which rise above all consciousness of a parent's errors, or even crimes, Van Monfoort looked down, as desired, upon the

court-yard, called the Bintenhoff. He there observed a young horse, of most surprising beauty, in the graceful appearance of untrimmed wildness, which nature—under favour of man's superior taste—intended those beautiful animals to wear for ever. Two grooms, who bore marks of a long journey, stood at each side of the spirited animal, insidiously exciting the curvets and caperings they intended to restrain, and which drew forth bursts of admiration from the straggling observers, who had followed them across the bridge into the court-yard, or come out of the offices of the palace.

An exclamation of rough applause from Van Monfoort at the gallant present, called Jacqueline herself to look out, ere she had completely perused her mother's description of the valuable animal. She gazed with great delight at this noble accession to her now most scanty stud; and in her boundless love for horse exercise, she longed to descend to the court-yard at once, and mount this bounding palfrey, which she felt her capability of managing. After some minutes' indulgence in her admiration, she resumed the reading of the letter; and when she read the concluding words, she exclaimed, with an air of deeply mortified regret

"Oh, Van Monfoort, this is too bad—this will kill me quite! Hark to my mother's words—'Receive my present with a cheerful heart—let it carry you one day to victory—and for my love, less than its value, reward nobly the bearer of the scroll and the care-takers of the animal, which is a gift only worthy of thy acceptance, as a type of thy untameable spirit, and, I hope, thy unfading beauty.'—Reward them nobly, Ludwick! I have not the means at hand of offering the meanest largesse—what oh! what can I do to save my mother's honour and my own?"

"The remedy is near Madam,—say but one word, and in a moment I mount my steed and am on the road to Teylingen—the stadtholder waits but your orders for relief to any amount—I know it!"

"Away, away, then! Go! lest my pride break out again, to consume me quite!"

So saying, she rushed from the chamber into her private cabinet; and just as she had, after a lapse of some minutes, repented her words, and rose for the purpose of retract-

ing them, she heard the tramp of hoofs below, and looking out, she saw the heavy figure of Van Monfoort borne across the draw-bridge with all the speed of which his heavy des-terre was capable.



CHAPTER XIV.

IN an almost incredibly short space of time, considering the nature of his mission and the negotiation which Jacqueline authorized him to enter on, Ludwick Van Monfoort came galloping again across the draw-bridge, and his horse's feet sounded once more on the pavement of the court-yard. But the tramp of others came at the same time upon Jacqueline's ear as she lay on the couch, which she had not quitted for the whole period of her ambassador's absence. She started up, and looking out, she saw the lion of Urk reach the door of entrance to the turret where she lay, and which is still pointed out to the curious, among the clustering buildings of the Binnerhoof, as that from the windows of which Maurice of Nassau is believed (may we hope falsely?) to have gazed two centuries later on the butchery of Barnevelt, the most virtuous politician of his age, and a model for patriots.

Jacqueline observed that Monfoort no longer rode his own clumsy and not over elegantly harnessed steed, but one of fine shape, high mettle, and superbly caparisoned. Two mounted attendants, in the handsome liveries of military service, followed close, and round the body of each she remarked a broad leathern girdle for the purpose of carrying specie, ere civilization taught men that the value of a paper medium is just proportioned to its convenience to society, which happily can stamp a worth on mashed-up rags quite equal to that, as fictitious as its own, of a thousand times its weight in metal. The carriers of the treasure on this occasion were soon disembarassed of their

lead, which Van Monfoort briskly transferred to his own shoulders, and leaving the stadtholder's horse to the care of the soldier-grooms, he entered the turret, and mounted its narrow stairs with long and heavy strides.

"Van Monfoort, can I accept this? may I again hold up my head for shame?" asked Jacqueline, as he threw the money-girths on the table, unloosed their buckles, and let the coin flow freely out.

"Madam, 'tis your own, and but a tithe of what is yours, did not the bandage of justice cover a pair of sleeping eyes. I know your noble nature, my mistress, and I can speak freely. By Heavens, then, were any other but yourself to show such qualms, I would believe it mockery! A sound kernel is often hid in a rough rind, countess, and my harsh words may have some truth in them. Believe me, then, that false delicacy is beyond all proportion worse than the real sort is worthy. Let me call Gobelin to deal out free largesse to those German grooms and your mother's messenger, and to put up the rest of the money."

"Act for me in this matter, good Ludwick—I do confess that the vice of my birth and bringing-up seems struggling with sound reason," said Jacqueline, brought to a true sense of the affair by her companion's blunt philosophy.

Gobelin was soon in the chamber, gloating with overjoyed gaze at the goodly confusion in which gold and silver pieces of various value were strewn upon the table. With a glad heart and wide-grasping hand, he carried away uncounted fistfuls, to lavish on the messengers of Countess Marguerite and Count Ostervent, as well as several poor pensioners who had long waited for the arrears of Jacqueline's usual bounty, which they now at length received with ample interest for the forced delay. While these gratifying acts of stewardship went on below, Jacqueline and Van Monfoort continued their conference above.

"And now, worthy Ludwick," said she, "that I have in part recovered from the turmoil caused by this unfortunate necessity, how, let me ask, could you have so soon accomplished your purpose? The very ride to Teylingen and back at utmost speed could scarcely be done in the

short time you have consumed, to say nothing of that required to break your purpose to this stadtholder, to allow of consideration on his part, and to pack this hateful dross, the taking of which, even though I scorn to touch it, lies so heavy on my heart!"

"Well might you marvel, Madam, had I all this to do in such brief space. But now—for the time is come—I must tell your highness, it was all arranged ere I reached this place this morning. I took my matin meal at Teylingen. Your money was ready counted, while I wended my way thence to Leyden—and it waited my return at a village still nearer at this side, under the care of the two stalwart bearers with a fresh horse for my use, furnished by their generous,—their *just* lord, who brooked no delay in his ardent wish for your service."

"What, then!—this was a plot between ye?"

"With your gracious favour, Countess, it was. A plot for your happiness and the country's good—the first step towards the glorious change I promised you erewhile."

"Van Monfoort!"

"Come, lady, come! no looks of unnatural anger, no undeserved reproaches! You have been well served, while to all-seeming forlorn. Your friends, though ruined, have not all proved false. Fortune has gone, but neither zeal nor honour. Full fourteen months of work have ripened the fruit of our deep-laid designs. A revolt is ready to break out. Many gallant chiefs of lately-cherished feuds, have changed their very nature at the country's call, and by your inspiration. Freedom to Holland, Zealand, and Friesland! is the common cry. Factions are smothered—at least for awhile. Kabblejaw and Hoek, Schieringer and Vestkooper, have sank their mutual hate in patriot fellowship. From north to south, from east to west, from the forest-depths of Drent to the wide ocean here at hand, there is an impulse working that must be triumphant. Heaven favours us well. The Count of Ostervent, a glorious mind cased in a goodly form, rich, brave and bountiful, has joined our cause, and common acclaim has put him at our head. We only wait for your sanction,—for your word, to put the whole scheme in motion and strike the general blow. Oh, Madam! how I glory in that flush of hereditary valour on thy fair face, that ray of ambition lighting thy bright

blue eye! Then shall be the colours of our cause, red, white and blue. I adopt them for mine from this hour, and swear that Holland shall do the same. Saints of Heaven! how my old blood is up, and my loosened nerves are stiffening again in these arms. I am young once more, and my dear country, too, shall shake off the yoke of age and slavery! Now, Madam, speak! Holland waits for your words, as a legion of warriors for the trumpet's blast."

If Van Monfoort's words were not eloquence, his looks and gestures were; and Jacqueline was hurried on by their effect, as though some new Demosthenes had rolled the thunder of his genius upon her ear. The sudden burst which had been made upon her unnatural repose, the great incitement thus rapidly urged on her, the little time for thought, and her innate ambition, all in a combined impulse, led her forward now. Battle, victory and vengeance danced confusedly in her mind, with the more noble views of her country's freedom and her people's happiness. The whole was a whirlwind inspiration, which swept her on towards her destiny.

"Be it my demon or my good angel, I know and care not now—Van Monfoort, I am all you wish or ask for!" cried she. "Lead me where and how you will—I devote myself to my country, and fearlessly throw myself on the flood, though it lead me to a cataract's verge!"

"My noble mistress!" spoken like the daughter of a line of heroes? Now, hear me; Count Ostervent and some warm friends wait for the issue of this conference, with what impatience you may judge. But I vouched for the result—I knew the blood of Bavaria! In the wild woods which surround the old castle of Teylingen our preparations have been long going on, and this passing visit of the stadtholder is a concerted scheme, to give him means of meeting with our common associates—and with *you*!—Had he dared to risk discovery, he had been here to-day to lay his homage at your feet. But as this could not be, without braving Philip's vengeance, the count and the associate friends—conspirators, if you will, for we glory in the name—implore you to ride to-morrow morn towards Teylingen, where, under the appearance of a hunting party, you shall see all, and in a visit, as if by chance to the

old pile, know more than I can venture now to tell. Do I read your consent in this silence?"

"Yes, Van Monfoort, I will go! I have been ever but a plaything in the hands of fate—I yield myself up without reserve!"

"Then once more I do you homage and swear fealty," exclaimed Ludwick, plumping down on his knees and kissing her hand. "Long live Jacqueline of Holland, and death to the usurper of her rights!"

"Amen, Amen! Long live Jacqueline!" cried old Gobelin, bursting open the door, and flinging himself beside Van Monfoort, having heard, through the pannel, every word of what passed, and proclaiming his espionage and his enthusiasm at the same time. But the one was pardoned for the sake of the other; and the narrow turret rung for some minutes with the prolonged shouts of this cordial proclamation. The scene was, however, quickly closed. Van Monfoort repaired below to send back the token agreed on to Count Ostervent, and to look after the care-taking of his own horse and of Jacqueline's new acquirement, which she was resolved to mount on the morrow. Gobelin set about his preparations for supper, and various other household details, with a spirit to which he had been long a stranger: and had he possessed such an audience of domestic associates as was formerly wont to throng the palace, he could not have failed to betray the secret, of which he had made himself the depository. The few unsophisticated menials of the present establishment saved him, however, and his mistress as well, from the betrayal which the cunning hangers-on of a court had surely led him to. The night passed over without any breach of trust; and the morning dawned, in all the bloom of May, and all the brightness of hope.

Jacqueline had striven to sleep, but in vain; snatches of slumber mixed with broken dreams brought her through the night. But though unrefreshed, she was not fatigued. Her mind on the contrary, was kept more on the stretch than if sleep had relaxed its tone. Those who have risen, after such a night of strong excitement, can understand the elastic spring that animates both mind and body, when it seems as if we could keep awake and in action for ever;

and they can picture the feverish flush on Jacqueline's cheek, the bright energy of her eyes, the activity of every movement, and the buoyancy of every thought. The nature of this state can be better felt than described, easier comprehended than defined. Had one deep vein of feeling been laid bare in her heart, either by reflection or by the touch of some chance association, all the superficial covering of high spirits which she now displayed might have been dissolved at once, and she would no doubt have sunk into a lower despondency than before. But the suddenness of Van Monfoort's intrusion on her long-indulged mood, the vigour of his words, the stirring appeals to all the weakest as well as the strongest points of her character, both as a woman and a princess, left no time for one moment's interruption, to the overlay of artificial excitements on the natural ardour of her temperament.

She was up with the dawn; and her attendant woman was soon, by her order, employed in looking out among the confusion of her long-neglected and much-reduced wardrobe, a dress suited to the station she was soon about to reassume, and the persons whom she was going to meet. We trust that we have not in the progress of our story given any impression of its heroine, that might imply an absence—a deficiency we are disposed to consider it—on her part, of a due attention to those minor branches of philosophy, which some call frivolous and vain. The suitableness of raiment and the becomingness of manners are links in the chain of social life, which harmonize with and beautify the whole. There is infinitely more wisdom in submitting to, than in spurning, those necessary concomitants of civilization, which, being artificial throughout, require the cement of elegance and refinement, to polish, if it cannot lighten the chain. Jacqueline was one of the most scrupulously well-dressed women of her day; and it was even the reproach of one of her country's obscure chroniclers that of the one hundred pounds sterling allowed to her per month, by Henry V., for her support while in England, one half was disbursed in attire and ornaments. Much of her former finery remained to her, but the greater part was lost during the late convulsions. It was among the residue that her woman now sought for something to suit the

present purpose; but it was not there that Jacqueline's taste was fixed.

Our readers may remember the hunting-dress worn by her on the occasion of her rendezvous with Gloucester in the Zevenvolden? It had been made expressly for that occasion, with the minutest attention to effect both as to its workmanship and its becomingness. It had never been worn but on that day; and it was still as perfectly fresh and untarnished as ever. It caught Jacqueline's eye, among several others of more pretension, both in fashion and colour; and although a throb of heated recollection shook her frame, it was in a moment stifled, by that desperate resolution, with which pride can for awhile master the humiliating memory of insult and wrong.

"*I will wear it!*" exclaimed Jacqueline, in a tone as imperious as if her tire-woman had presumed to oppose her choice. But when the dress was on, every plait arranged, and every fold in place, she found that one finishing accessory was wanting—the fatal girdle, without which the suite was incomplete. *There* lurked a danger deeper than the remembrance of Gloucester's outrage. Had she suffered her mind to rest one moment there, the business of the morn, perhaps her life's whole destiny, had been upset or turned aside; but with an instinct of danger, like those who shut their eyes on a precipice's edge, she would not even look at the perilous object, but snatching it from its place in her cabinet, she hurriedly bound it round her waist, trusting to her accuracy of touch to give its due position. The golden side plates and bullion tassels, sparkling with rubies and emeralds, were next fastened in her hair, and when the head-dress was in place, her bow in hand and quiver in belt, she stood exactly as we first introduced her in the opening pages of our tale.

Van Monfoort waited old Gobelin's summons to attend the countess to the court-yard. His eyes glistened with pride as he gazed on his beautiful and beloved sovereign, and a wide perspective of glory spread out before him. He bowed low, but his rude emotion did not allow him to speak, as Jacqueline, after a slight repast, gave him her hand, and they descended the stair. In the court stood Van Monfoort's borrowed horse, looking fresh and glitter-

ing, but quite eclipsed by the incomparable beauty of Jacqueline's, which was at the same moment brought out from his stable. His fine limbs, compact and nervous carcase, glossy skin, flowing mane and tail, his swelling nostrils and rolling eyes, and the unruly, but by no means vicious air with which he pawed and fractured the pavement of small bricks (which was then, as now, the flooring of court and causeway throughout the country,) spoke him of pure breed and high spirit—such a one, in short, as was fitting the rider who now quickly took her graceful seat, and made him feel the mastery of her light, firm hand. After a few curvettes and caprioles that at once told her the temper of her palfry, and were so encouraged or repressed as to show him he carried command and skill on his back, Jacqueline loosened her rein, and leading towards the woods, cantered off with Van Monfoort by her side. Old Gobelin pressed afterwards, as fast as was compatible with the wheezy and stiff-limbed animal he usually rode, urged on by a huge pair of rusty and blunted spurs, which had in earlier days formed an appendage of the war-boots of some Florent or Theodric, names in which the early counts of Holland especially rejoiced.

Ere the wood was cleared by Jacqueline and Van Monfoort, Gobelin was thoroughly thrown out. Had the country between that and Leyden contained an elevation at all higher than a mole-hill, he might possibly have caught a distant view of his forerunners, sweeping along the causeway leading from the Hague to that town; but as it was, he never gained a glimpse of them till full an hour after their arrival at Teylingen Castle, where he had been ordered to join them as soon as he could. They had scarcely pulled in rein, or exchanged a word during the ride. Half absorbed in reverie, half excited to thoughtlessness, our heroine hastened on, delighted with the movement and the beauty of her horse, and, as all so situated are more or less, proud, even though confined to self-observation, of the mastery over the glorious animal that owns and trembles at the influence of man's slightest touch or briefest command.

Leyden left at one side, without even a passing thought of the gallant siege it had lately stood, yet but a type of the immortal one above two centuries later, which the pen

of history has recorded, and the pencil of genius consecrated*—and the deep forest which then spread over the country traversed, the travellers at length arrived within sight of the castle of Teylingen, and then for the first time pulled up their steeds, and looked on the venerable pile.

Tradition threw back its origin to the commencement of the Christian era: it was on that account alone a monument well suited to inspire respect. Its appearance was accordant to its age and to the importance of the noble family who had possessed it uninterrupted, till one of the old race, having joined in the celebrated conspiracy of Gerritt Van Velsen against Floris V., Count of Holland, it was confiscated by the states of the province, and became the hereditary residence of the forester, possession being, however, granted for life to the sister of Dirk of Teylingen, its last and rebellious lord.

It was an extensive and massive construction of red brick, kept together with the cement of mixed mortar and sea-shells, common to the earliest buildings of the Christian era. Its form was in singular defiance of all regular system of architecture, the consequence, no doubt, of its being constructed at different epochs, and according to various shades of taste. Yet the general aspect was to a high degree imposing. The main building had its south-eastern side, from which Jacqueline and Van Monfoort now viewed it, the appearance of being completely circular; but at the opposite sides its aspect was angular. The top was covered by a huge leaden cupola; the eastern and northern approaches were defended by broad and deep moats—the west and south by regular fortifications and outstanding batteries. The great entrance fronted the north, and posterns opened to the westward and eastward, the latter of which, surmounted by the little casements that lighted the dungeons, still exist in the shell of the main building.

Van Monfoort pointed out to Jacqueline the draw-bridge lowered across the moat, and quite unguarded, proving that every obstacle and every observer were designedly re-

* In the fine work of Wapper of Antwerp, exhibited at Brussels in the summer of 1830, probably the most beautiful picture painted by any Flemish artist for many a year, and promising a revival of the splendid school of Rubens and Vandyke.

moved. Not even a ward was to be seen on the walls; the whole presented a picture of desolate, yet imposing majesty. It was a perfect type of solitary power; and it impressed the observers with a modified sentiment of that awe, which is one of the main attributes of the sublime, and which is ever strongly excited by monuments of mortal strength standing amidst Nature's loveliness. The thick forest all around, not one young leaf of which was seen to flutter in the stilly morning, the calm surface of the moat on which no living thing floated, and the mysterious silence of the scene, produced altogether an irresistible feeling of dread in Jacqueline's bosom. She would not, however, give way to fear; nor was she susceptible to any of the satellite weaknesses that revolve round the orbit of that degrading passion. Suspicion, for instance, never entered her mind; and even on the present occasion, mysterious, and in some degree perilous as it was, the notion never flashed on her that Philip's jealousy of her very existence, acting on the readiness of his own creatures, and the cupidity of those who had been her partizans, might have laid a snare for her, into which she had perhaps imprudently rushed. Less nobly constituted minds would have shrunk and trembled under the apprehension of treachery—but she felt nothing such.

"How desolate and unpeopled is this huge building and its appurtenant outworks!" said she. "Can it indeed contain those friendly inmates you have led me to look for? 'Tis more like some lone castle of enchantment—How is this Van Monfoort?"

"In truth there is a magic in it, Madam," replied Ludwick, with a grim smile—a most uncommon variation to the rugged expression of his vision. "Shall we now enter?"

"Enter!" exclaimed Jacqueline, starting, as though some chord of doubt had been electrically struck within her. Then, after a moment's pause, drawing her lovely head higher up, sitting still more erect than before in her saddle, and raising her bridle hand to give her palfrey a forward motion, she added, "Ay, Monfoort, I will solve this riddle, come what may!"

In an instant more she was within the great court of the castle, the gates of which lay open, without a living soul appearing either to do her honour or offer her

violence. She rode on to the porch that overhung the arched door-way of the *corps-de-logis*, or main building, which was also thrown wide back on its hinges. She here sprang from her horse, Van Monfoort having also dismounted. He turned both animals loose. His own knew the way to the stables, and followed by the stranger, whose graceful boundings made the court-yard echoes ring, was soon out of sight round an angular projection of the offices.

Jacqueline stepped on towards the entrance door, but just as she was about to enter the porch she was arrested by the sight of a hieroglyphic emblem which hung above, of a nature so prominent and unequivocal, that it fascinated her gaze beyond the power of withdrawal, and struck her almost breathless with astonishment.

Painted in large letters on the entablature of the porch were the following words,

U

DIENAAR.

and between them hung a fresh-cut branch of willow just bursting out in the graceful foliage of spring. This emblem of feeling, properly read, made this sentence, "U WILLIGE DIENAAR," "your devoted servant;"—the word *willige* having the two meanings, *willow* and *devoted*, and the whole being, in the floral phraseology of the country and time, tantamount to a declaration of love, and a demand in marriage.

A swell of pride and resentment rushed on Jacqueline at sight of this audacious avowal, from an unknown, and, as she indignantly felt, an upstart minion of her worst enemy; and the pang was rendered ten-fold more agonizing from the consciousness that she had been duped into the degradation of actually encountering this outrage, by the man on whom among all others she would have reckoned as the most incorruptible champion of her honour. With a look of angry reproach she turned towards Van Monfoort; but he met her burning glance before her anger could explode, by motioning forward, and at the same time exclaiming.

"Madam, behold the Count of Ostervent!"

Jacqueline's eyes involuntarily turned in the direction of the person thus pointed out, who had advanced a few steps

from the building under the porch. The tall figure of a man met her looks, dressed in the superb state-mantle of the order of nobility, his head covered with a richly-plumed and ornamented cap, and his whole air and mien assorting with the dignity of his station. But his *face!* when Jacqueline gazed on it, a mist seemed to rush from her heart to her brain. She did not lose her consciousness or self-command; no shriek broke from her; no hysteric-burst betrayed her emotion; but grasping Van Monfoort's arm, she gazed before her, and felt that the blood ran visibly hot and cold from her bosom to her face, in motion so rapid as to threaten suffocation. The Count of Ostervent—albeit as moved as she was—preserved his presence of mind, and throwing off his cap and mantle, he dropped on one knee before her, and revealed the very figure and features and the identical costume of the young hunter who had broken first on her monotony of wretchedness in the forest of Drent, and whose subsequent career and conduct had been ever since the cause of such varied and painful agitation. It was in truth Vrank Van Borselen that now stood identified with the Count of Ostervent, the title just before bestowed on him, together with the office of Stadtholder of Holland, by the too tardy gratitude of Philip of Burgundy.

Who may effectively describe such a scene as this?—The pen refuses to move fast enough—it cannot keep pace with the lightning impulse of the mind, which imagines all that was looked and felt. The spoken words admit of no transcript—so few, so imperfect, so broken, that faithfully recorded, they would only throw a taint of burlesque on the pure, bright colouring of nature and feeling.

In whatever phrase Van Borselen strove to make his emotion intelligible to the mistress of his heart—in whatever efforts at utterable reply she acknowledged his avowal—whatever might have been their looks, their tone, their gestures—it must altogether have amounted to that true eloquence which is of feeling more than of diction, and which speaks to the heart more than to the reason; for the rough sympathy of Van Monfoort paid the most unequivocal tribute to its effect, in a half-smothered whine, and a rapid repetition of thumps against his breast, which told that natural feeling was struggling for a vent, and that instinctive manliness was labouring to repress it.

The first sentence which he caught distinctly, all that preceded it having only buzzed and tingled in his ears, was spoken by Borselen.

"Let all then be forgotten *since* that day—all doubt, all fear, all suffering; let our minds revert alone to the day itself; let it be a point of happiness by which to steer our future course. Be now and ever as I saw you then, and as you look this moment, radiant and beautiful in the glow of feeling and courage! The dangers of that day were as nought to what we have now to brave together—*Thy* inspirations but as a shadow to that which animates me now."

"And *my* hope, my ardour, my affection—yes, I confess it fully!—but the dawning of morn compared to the meridian blaze that lights me on to-day! Oh, Van Borselen, can this be true? Am I not the sport of some wild phantasy? Do I live, indeed, in the certainty of this happiness? Is all that you tell me real—all you look sincere? My incredulous heart still throbs in doubt: I want yet some proof."

"This, this, then, be the proof my unbounded attachment, my eternal devotion, my audacious love! ———!! Bid me now die for my offence, and expiate it on the spot!"

With the first words of this speech he sprang from the kneeling posture in which he had for many preceding minutes remained, as if transfixed in immoveable awe.—During the long pause, which we have striven to make expressive by an unusual connecting *dash*, he had thrown his arm round Jacqueline's unshrinking form, and imprinted on her lips such a succession of eloquent evidences of his and her own being, as would remove the doubts of the most skeptic infidel that ever marvelled at a miracle. When the phrase was finished, and the evidence registered in her heart, he loosed his clasp, withdrew a step, and drawing a short dagger from his belt, he offered its hilt to her grasp. A wild apostrophe of astonishment, accompanied by a mystic smile, was Jacqueline's answer, as she snatched the weapon and flung it aside. Then, wrenching open the clasp, which fastened the girdle round her waist, she threw it with both arms round her lover's neck—and then—draw close your veil, spirit of modern prudery! turn quick aside, essence of mock discretion!—

then did our heroine freely fling herself into his embraces; and sob and weep, in the outburst of as holy a passion as ever sanctified mortal bosom.

A loud clapping of hard palms—a crash of laughter, such as a sportive hyena might have laughed on witnessing the embrace of Endymion and Diana in the forest—and a chuckling utterance of “ ’Tis good ! ’tis good ! ’tis good ! ” with all the glee of an enraptured Hollander, were the sounds that aroused the too happy pair from their ecstasy. But before they could break away from their fast-locked enthrallment, old Ludwick burst open the inner door of the small semicircular vestibule in which this scene was enacted, and exposed to view the spacious and lofty entrance-hall to the castle, so furnished and filled as to make Jacqueline cling closer and closer to the living stem round which she twined, as though truth, shelter, and conviction were to be found there and there alone.

CHAPTER XV.

WITHIN the hall was assembled a number, which, in its comparatively confined extent, seemed a host, of armed men—knights furnished at all points, squires bearing lances, swords, and helmets; pages with banners, shields, and war-harness; all in fact that could be combined of martial preparation, to give force to a spectacle purposely arranged for effect. The walls were hung with flags of many a brilliant hue and ingenious device, joined together with festoons of Jacqueline’s peculiar colours, blue and white; and intermixed with all were decorations of verdant willow branches, while in every vacant space was written, in broad characters,

U

DIENAAR;

the whole offering an emblematical vow of service and fidelity to the cause it typified.

No sooner did Van Monfoort throw open the folding doors, and display Jacqueline in the very act of her personal and most plenary pledge, to what they had all laboured for,

VOL. II.—16

and all expected, than a loud cry of enthusiasm burst from the assembled chiefs, and shout upon shout made the walls ring with reverberations of her name. Aroused to the full observance of the scene, she looked and listened almost aghast at a sight so undreamed-of, and so wild, in what had just before appeared the very centre of solitude, and at that instant only seemed fitting for the silent mysteries of love. Many a strange face caught her wandering gaze, but it was also fixed on that of many staunch adherents familiar to her memory, and pledged to her cause by innumerable proofs. Among these were William de Brederode, Theodoric de Merwede, Spiering, Æalberg, and several others. But he whose presence most surprised, and at the same time most pleased her, was Rudolf Van Diepenholt, dressed in all the pomp of full canonicals, with mitre on head, and crosier in hand, to give the weight and sanction of religion to the holy cause which his associates had sworn to forward at the sword's point. He stood at the upper end of the hall, on a somewhat elevated platform, and when the mass of warriors opened out to give his person fully to Jacqueline's view, he raised his hands in the gesture of prayer, and poured out a short extemporaneous blessing of animating eloquence on Jacqueline and her cause. The pious fervour of her champions was raised still higher by this. It could not be suppressed by any rules of commonplace etiquette. Without distinctions of rank or thoughts of precedence, they thronged round their reinstalled sovereign; and a scene took place somewhat similar, but still more inspiring, inasmuch as it was more unlooked-for by her, and far more perilous to her friends, than that of the jay-shooting of Tergoes.

And in the midst of this intoxicating tumult, she gave a retrospective regret to the many brave men who had there been pledged, and had since fallen in her hitherto hapless cause; and even now an involuntary shudder checked the flow of her delight, in dread lest she was committing all that was dearest to her heart in the dark fate that seemed to rule her life.

When the animation of the scene subsided, and explanations of all that was strange, which, indeed, included every thing that she saw, were given to Jacqueline, Vrank—for so we love still to call him in preference to any of his titles—took her hand to lead her to the banqueting-room, where a fitting repast was prepared, on the best scale that the half-

furnished state of the castle allowed. This, however, was very insufficient to the due accommodation of so many guests as were now brought together ; for, even when the place was regularly inhabited by the foresters or wood-wardens, no chance of such a party was ever provided for. Of eatables there was quite enough—of drink an abundant store—but table conveniences were lamentably deficient. Many a brace of high-born barons, or knights well known to fame, ate off the same plate on this occasion, but when it came to the drinking part of the feast, that arrangement could not hold good. To supply each man with a vessel of some sort for the quaffing of his liquor—wine, hydromel, or other cordials for the many thirsty palates—was an absolute necessity. The whole store of glass goblet and drinking-horn was displayed, but fell far short of the numbers of the guests. The ready invention of the Count of Ostervent was not at fault in this dilemma. Not venturing to purchase at Leyden a quantity which must have excited suspicion there, he had the night before ordered some of his varlets to prepare for the morning feast a supply of suitably sized pitchers, formed of the yellowish gray clay which surrounded the castle, and which was used for such purposes by the potters of the neighbouring towns. These but half-baked, and consequently still imperfectly dry, were, however, admirably suited to the thirsty and not over-nice company. Beside each man was placed a pitcher, where goblet or horn was deficient ; and each, as he raised his vessel to his head, left the print of his thumb and fingers deep in the sides. These marks were, however, made but *once*, for the custom of the days required that after emptying his vessel for the toast to which he pledged, each wassailer should instantly fling it away, nor do dishonour to the subject, by mixing even the dregs of the liquor with any that should be dedicated to another.

And the very first toast now proposed by the städtholder, and for which every goblet, horn, and pitcher was filled brimming up, was, as may be divined, in honour of her to whom politically, as well as personally, he had devoted himself, and to whose cause every man present was equally sworn. We need scarcely describe the enthusiasm inspired by this fresh mention of her name ; nor is it necessary to vouch that every thirsty enthusiast saw the bottom of his caniken dry ere he took it from his lips.

“ Throw wide the casements ! and let each man follow

my example, in doing eternal honour to the toast we have pledged!" exclaimed Van Borselen, rising from his seat, and approaching the windows which were all opened at his bidding.

"There!" continued he, flinging his glass, a curious and valuable one,* from the window into the deep-filled moat, that flowed close under the building at its eastern side—"there! let no pollution of fermented liquid ever stain again the vessel sanctified by such a toast, but let it lie to all ages in the element fit to shrine vessel so purified!"

This high-flown sentiment was echoed by the rest, and the example followed; every other vessel, which had been so honoured, being flung into the moat, albeit that some of them were doomed to stick for many a cycle in the mud at the bottom of the water. Thence they have been one by one extracted at various epochs since, and preserved with the glass itself; interesting relics to mere antiquaries, and more so still to enthusiasts, who have imagined a fable of Jacqueline having been the maker of these now classical pitchers, and who fancy in the rough finger-prints on their sides the very pressure of her delicate hand, as a genuine mint-mark to stamp their value with posterity.

We cannot enter in detail on the important business of those explanations which Vrank Van Borselen undertook; firstly, in his proper character under that name; secondly, in his hereditary title, as Heer Borselen of Eversdyke; and thirdly, in his newly-acquired dignity as Count of Ostervent. All that is essential for our reader's information is his absolute conviction of Jacqueline's innocence from all the

* A glass, which I am well disposed to believe identical with this, is still preserved, and forms one of a beautiful and unique collection formed by Lady Bagot, the British ambassadress at the Hague. It is of that kind which was used at Friesland long previous to the period of this tale, at banquets given in honour of affianced or newly-married lovers. It is tankard-shaped, with a handle and lid. On one segment, for we cannot say side, is painted, rudely enough, the figure of a young man, whose ruddy face, red hair, blue hose, green hat, and rakish air, prove him to be a gay bridegroom, jovially pledging to his mistress—for he holds a cup in one hand, while the other is stuck akimbo. And on the reverse, is the fair model of a Frison maiden, broad-set, flat-faced, and leering under a profusion of yellow locks, in red kirtle, and light blue boddice, her left hand grasping a garland, and her right opened out towards her lover, and only separated from his by the green and yellow leaves of a dubious looking daffydowndilly.

charges which had weighed so heavily against her, a conviction arising from the minutest inquiries on every point which compromised her reputation. Ludwick Van Monfoort had mainly contributed to let in the light of truth on his mind on these questions. It is of no moment to the object of our tale to relate how he made known to Van Borselen his forgetfulness of all animosity on public ground, and the growth of his personal regard. They soon came together by previous consent as friends; and when they separated again for purposes of reciprocal good, it was as conspirators. The atrocious accusations of Giles Postel were swept away; the charge of Jacqueline's complicity with John Chevalier disproved by the production of his dying confession, which did her justice in the most exalted terms, her true situation as to Gloucester and Fitz-walter was made clear as day. The evident wrong done her by Philip of Burgundy's usurpation, even after her wretched husband's death, when not even the shadow of such a claim as his existed, was too glaring to require the magnifying lens of Van Monfoort's eloquence. All, in short, combined to throw Van Borselen fully and fervently into the designs formed for her re-establishment in dominion; and, his deep-rooted attachment being now unrestrained by any obstacle of moral tendency or religious tie, he entered into the grand scheme which, ostensibly tending but to Jacqueline's happiness, involved the most important efforts for his own.

There are periods in which the recorder, as well as the reader of adventures like these, requires repose. Mutual allowance should be made by the two parties concerned. We now approach the conclusion of our story; and as we have on many occasions during our progress repressed, or cut short many tempting digressions, we now claim indulgence for any apparent omission, having still to relate eventful—the most eventful—incidents of our heroine's fate. We feel sensible of the embarrassment of maintaining well the connected interest of a recital, which should neither lag nor hurry on, neither become prolix nor confused; and craving the patience of our copartners in the task of getting through the work, we beg them to excuse all imperfections incidental to its execution at this critical period. Much, therefore, we leave to their own imagining of Jacqueline's and Van Borselen's unbounded delight, in their present reunion as lovers, and in their reciprocal hopes—she as a

reinstated sovereign, he as the most distinguished of her subjects, to whom she paid back political fealty and homage with her heart's most deep devotion. The wild expression of her long-repressed sensations, and the unrestrained enthusiasm of his hitherto reserved and serious character, gave a totally new turn to their habits of thought and action; and showed them to each other and to themselves in an aspect as extraordinary as it was exquisite.

The full extent of their enjoyments we may not penetrate—the whole of their perilous imprudence we must not tell. Let it suffice that they abandoned themselves, their cause, their friends, their country—all, for the intoxicating rapture of the heart; and it will be soon seen what penalty they paid for the delirious happiness, to which reason brought no control, nor conscience a reproach.

After a few days of secret council and well-digested plans, the various confederates disappeared from Teylingen, which resumed all its wonted solitude of appearance; the small retinue of the stadtholder during this flying visit being but specks in the atmosphere of its loneliness. Even they, too, were in a little while removed to his castle of Zuylen, on the river Vecht, within a league of Utrecht. It was, like Teylingen, a building of great antiquity, which had come into the family of Borselen by marriage, and was at this period used by him as his principal residence in Holland. There he himself retired, after his ostensible purpose of his forest inspection was finished. But he did not retire there quite alone! Nor, when unaccompanied, were his days and nights passed in the unsocial gloom of such a retreat. The truth, in fact, must out; at least as much of it as was apparent at the time, or could be sifted by the close observers, whose pleasure or business it was to scrutinize every act, word, or look of the Count of Ostervent, in relation to his renewed intercourse with Countess Jacqueline.

Frequently, then, was it said, the figure of the count was seen rapidly moving through the forest at twilight, in the close neighbourhood of the Hague; and while a varlet with a led horse was remarked loitering about the outskirts in the dawn, having passed the night no one knew where, the same figure used to return on its previous path with a slow and unwilling movement, in wide contrast to the elastic pace of the preceding evening. Whispers had even gone abroad, that a cloak-covered man of the same height as the stad-

holder, was more than once observed by moonlight entering the low door of the palace-turret; and when the women of the establishment remarked at morning to old Gobelin the strange noises which had disturbed their sleep, he used to give them angry reproofs, observing, that "it was hard if the ghosts of the old counts and countesses of Holland might not be allowed to amuse themselves, by occasional gambols in the chambers of their own palace!"

But this was not all. The numerous train of domestics at Zuylen made no secret of avowing that Countess Jacqueline and her old confidant came many a time there on horseback after dusk, and that in spite of her precautions she was observed walking in the gardens with the stadtholder, in all the imprudent exposure of false security. And then her stolen visits to Teylingen on various pretexts—and the marvellous coincidence of his excursions in that direction—and—but need we multiply proofs of all that brought conviction to the public mind? or make our pages, like those of history on this occasion, a scandalous chronicle? No! We admit all the facts—make no defence—and leave the character, the motives, and the morals of our heroine wholly at our reader's mercy.

It was not possible that Duke Philip of Burgundy should have remained long ignorant of what was notorious to all Jacqueline's enemies, the regret of most of her friends, and the common talk of the country. Among the many who knew of her almost public meeting with the stadtholder at Teylingen, was it to be expected that all were invulnerable to corruption? or supposing that very improbable case, ought it to have been looked for that none of the sordid beings who watched the suspected and dreaded victim of their employer, could fail to detect the ill-kept secret? Avarice was not certainly in those days, before commercial selfishness extinguished martial generosity, the besetting sin of the Dutch character. The frank and cordial nature of the times coloured the customs of the people. Yet amid the honest fidelity which distinguished them, one instance of sordid treachery crept in; as a rare occasion of hospitality may, at times, be in our days detected, varying the unsocial exclusion, which so disfigures the better parts of the now national mind.

One day, in the very midst of that inconsiderate abandonment to bliss which we have striven to describe, a special

messenger reached the castle of Zuylen, summoning the stadtholder, in the name of his liege lord, Duke Philip of Burgundy, to repair on the spot to Russelmonde, there to receive a communication from its governor, the redoubted John Vilain, on a state affair of the utmost importance. This was a circumstance of startling difficulty. In another week the general insurrection was to have broken out. But it would have been most hazardous to hurry it on now, in consequence of this surprise, it being impossible to communicate with the various chiefs of the confederates in sufficient time to change the previously settled plan. Yet such was Jacqueline's advice. Urged by two impulses—her personal courage, and her woman's fears for him she loved—she thought it better to brave the risk of an immediate revolt than to trust the person of Van Borselen in Philip's hands. This opinion, however strongly urged, was more strongly combated, and finally overpowered by Van Borselen. He argued that any rashness might lead to ruin; that Philip had given him no proof of suspicion; that he was not himself at Russelmonde; and that an obedience to his mandate would at once disarm any lurking doubt, or remove any sinister impression. But the secret feeling that prompted this reasoning existed in the fact of that passion which by a strange anomaly in sensation, urges men to deeds of danger, and blinds them to the risks which may snatch them for ever from the object that alone gives value to life, and in the very time that the object is most worth living for.

Jacqueline found opposition useless, and submitted to the stadtholder's decision with a pang of dismal foreboding, too well founded, as shall be presently seen.

Van Borselen, without the slightest show of hesitation, prepared for his journey; and as soon as the duke's messenger was refreshed, and a suitable escort equipped, he was on the road towards Flanders, duly attended, and burning with impatience to know the import of the affair which had thus broken on his brief season of delight, and frustrated the plans meant to make it eternal. He never slept, and scarcely ate, till he reached the castle of Russelmonde, which stood on the banks of the Scheldt, the walls being washed by the river at one side, and the other being strongly defended by ramparts and the natural protection of a deep ravine, that made the place, while its occupiers had the command of the river, almost impregnable. But Vrank lost no time in

examination of the fortress. Love dims the vision of the keenest military eye, and adds new activity to the most vigorous limbs. So it was on this occasion, at least; for Vrank scarcely saw the peculiarities of the place, into which he entered with a rapidity of motion that kept his followers on the stretch, and astonished those by whom he was received—for John Vilain and his garrison marvelled at his want of suspicion of what they knew so well, namely, that the Count of Ostervent was a state-prisoner the moment he crossed the castle-moat.

This intelligence was conveyed to him by the governor in no phrase of measured courtesy, but with the blunt and somewhat brutal tone of triumph, which so coarse a mind as John Vilain's might feel, at getting fast hold of a criminal who had once before escaped from his gripe. Never did so full a sense of his own rash confidence strike on mortal man with more force than that which overwhelmed Van Borselen. Few of his thoughts were given to personal concern—but he pictured the anguish of Jacqueline in this new trial, and he was irresistibly impressed with her own belief, that the fatality which pursued her extended its baneful influence on all connected with her. Still he gloried in the cause for which he had lived an enthusiast, and was now prepared to die a martyr.

The very morning after his arrival, John Vilain entered the room appropriated to his use, and in the discomfort of which he had passed a night of much misery.

"Count Ostervent," said the governor, with a disturbed and gloomy air, "I am forced to communicate to you an order just received from his highness the Duke of Burgundy."

"Be seated, governor; calm your perturbation, and read—I am prepared for the contents."

"Well, then—thus it runs," resumed Vilain, recovering his composure a little, taking breath, and reading from the scroll. "'We, Philip, Duke of Burgundy, Count of Artois, Namur, and Hainault,—Renvart of Holland, Zealand, and Friesland'—By St. Michael, and as I am a true knight, I cannot go on!—I must cut it short, count—it is an order to put you instantly to death!"

In other circumstances the unfortunate prisoner might have smiled at the sensitive delicacy that boggled at the preamble, but made no hesitation in thundering forth the terrible announcement contained in the body of the sentence. A

it was, he was for the moment horror-stricken. He had braved death many a time, and could do so manfully again and again, arms in his hands, with his blood up, and his honour untainted, but to die a traitor's death in the silent ignominy of a prison was a frightful contemplation, made tenfold more so by the idea of such a separation from her he adored. The anguish of that moment was surely more than ample expiation for all the faults and misdemeanours of an ordinary sinner—and Vrank Borselen was certainly not more than that. But his natural courage and self-command prevailed quickly over this passing suffering. He summoned up all his resolution and presence of mind, and with the fast-clinging love of life, he said,

"This is indeed abrupt! Is the order under Philip's own hand?"

"Ay, count, too surely so," said Vilain.

"It trembled when it signed so cruel a sentence, good governor!"

"It is not used to tremble, Count Ostervent."

"Nor are you, valiant knight—yet your hand shakes, and your lip quivers while you merely read the scroll. How then must remorse work in *his* heart, who signed such a warrant against the life of a man unheard in his own defence? Think you not, governor, that he would thank the man who saved his conscience from such remorse, and gave him time to reflect twice on such a matter? Would he not hold himself better served by disobedience than by a too prompt compliance? Where is the duke?"

"At Ghent—I must myself bring him the news of your death—such is my private instruction."

"And can you, brave knight, perform this harsh office, and send a man in the very spring of youth, and known like yourself to honourable fame, to his last account, torn from all he holds dear in life, and unprepared for death?"

"The saints forbid! No, count, the castle almoner is ready in the next cell, to shrive you, while the headsman prepares you for the block, and I myself will take charge of any message to your friends."

"Good governor, is this enough! Is this all the time you grant me, to make my peace with Heaven, and settle my worldly affairs?"

"Many a brave man, noble count, gets less on the battlefield."

"Ay, governor, but these men are prepared for their fate

—they court death in a glorious cause, and die like heroes in the broad eye of fame—but it is far different when the stroke falls suddenly like this, and the severed head is held up in felon infamy? Remember also, governor—”

“Count Ostervent, my orders are positive and peremptory.”

“Then I can make no further appeal—I scorn to become a beggar even for my life—but I see your emotion.”

“Do you? Then I *must* cut the matter short—count, we—that is to say the priest, the executioner, and myself—are all ready. I trust you bear *me* no ill will?”

As Vilain uttered these words he opened the door; and Vrank saw in the adjoining room the awful accompaniments of death, indeed all ready—a priest, in his cassock and book in hand, a grim ruffian holding an axe, some half-dozen armed guards, and a small wooden block, on which an assistant was placing a black cloth with one hand, while he held a basket with the other.

Vrank started back and stood still, gaping at this dreadful apparatus. The bold heart that would have swelled and bounded at the sight of legions of hosts sunk and collapsed at a spectacle like this. Whether the victim grew red or pale, whether his limbs shook or his teeth chattered, we neither know nor care. He had been less than man were he unaffected by such a doom—yet worse than craven had he not been able to meet it as a man ought to do. He looked for some seconds on the scene, then suddenly threw his eyes to Heaven—placed his hands on his breast—and then, heaving one deep sigh, as if of farewell to the world, he calmly turned towards the governor and said,

“I am now quite, *quite* ready.”

But if he was, or fancied himself so, it seemed as though the governor were not. He in his turn gazed for some moments on the hideous tranquillity of the preparations outside the cell, and a desperate internal conflict was evident in the workings of his coarse features. His stern frown, fixed teeth, projecting under lip, clenched hands, and rigid attitude, proved eloquently that he was not a mere brutal executor of a tyrant's will, but as humane as he was brave, though neither quality were adorned with the graceful attributes which add so much to their value in more refined possessors. But what could be expected from this rude soldier, when a sense of duty combated his mutinous misgivings?

"No, no—I cannot do it! Follow me, count!" exclaimed he—and he led the way into the outer room. Van Borselen followed him with a firm step; and no sooner were they inside than the headsman advanced towards them, the priest began to mutter the death prayer, the guards stood to their arms, and the door was closed by the attendant.

About the same hour on the following morning Philip of Burgundy was pacing one of the broad galleries of his palace in the city of Ghent—the same which Jacqueline of Holland had often and often walked in, during her three months' imprisonment not two years before; and from which she had, to his great anger at the time, effected her escape. Philip had few hours free from care, and this was not one of them. Ambition's votaries can seldom give a holyday to thought; much less one who was, like Duke Philip, so steeped in the guilt of spoliation and oppression. Poor though the solace be to suffering humanity, and insufficient as is the penalty thus paid by the oppressor, it is still sweet to know that his triumph is not unalloyed by remorse, and that his hours of solitude are not hours of rest. Imagination, whose angel-visits brighten the virtuous mind, haunts him like a fiend. The blood of the brave thousands crushed by his artillery's wheels rises up before him in suffocating fumes—the shrieks of dying men, despairing women, and orphaned children ring in his brain—the curse of the generous weighs him down—the brand of history is ready to sear his name,—and the fear of the grave makes the boldest tyrant start and thrill with horror. We know not that Philip's acts deserved this extent of expression. It is perhaps prompted by deeds done in the days in which we live, rather than in those of which we write. The crimes of earlier ages may find mercy, in consideration of the darkness of the moral atmosphere in which men walked and erred. But nothing restrains us now from execrating the throned wretch, wilfully blind to the broad blaze of civilized truth, who tramples on his kind, and grows saturate with the best blood of freedom.

Philip walked apart from the attendants of his train. He displayed more than ordinary anxiety. He was now a far different man, in seeming and in every-day habits, from what he was when we showed him to our readers in the tilt-yard of Hesdin. His personal quarrel with Gloucester had been long since set at rest, by the decision of

the council at Paris, which declared there was no cause of combat between them. His "customs of exercise" were consequently given up; and with them much of that buoyancy of spirit and manner by which he had been distinguished. The protracted troubles of Holland and the success of his usurpation had brought him daily anxiety, and it is to be hoped remorse; while instead of fêtes and tournaments, excursions to Paris, and the inspiring variety of his former life, his time was consumed in negotiations with refractory towns, in sifting conspiracies, and consolidating his new acquirements by every art of unworthy chicanery.

"The Governor of Russelmonde is arrived post-haste, and waits outside for your highness's commands," said the officer next in attendance on Philip's person, approaching a few steps towards his line of promenade.

"Already!" exclaimed the duke, with an impatient and almost furious start, and a stamp on the floor that made the gallery ring. "Oh! this is the curse of power, to find ever at hand tools over anxious to do its most hasty bidding! Let Vilain attend me in my closet!"

With the utterance of this sentiment (which might have been either the momentary remorse of a man really in a passion, or the affected moderation of pretence), he quitted the gallery; and in a few moments afterward the Governor of Russelmonde entered his private closet, and stood silent before him.

"Well, John Vilain, why do you not speak? Why stand with that hangman's look, and force me to question you? Is he dead?"

"Needs your highness to ask that question? Dared I disobey your orders?"

"Prithee, good friend, answer me at once. Is he dead?"

"He is, may it please your highness; the Count of Oostervent died a traitor's death yesternorn."

At these words, Philip seemed overwhelmed with grief. "Dead!" exclaimed he, perturbedly pacing the floor. "Dead, and as a traitor too! The gallant and noble stem of the Borselens, the flower of chivalry—oh, John, John! what have you done? And I, why did I not wait for proof? why not let them consummate the marriage that would have sealed the forfeiture of all her dominions? Oh, John Vilain, my trusty but imprudent friend, we have been too hasty!"

VOL. II.—17

Had Philip's sorrow been merely for the sudden death of a suspected vassal, John Vilain might have perhaps calculated on its passing over without any very violent effect. But the latter part of the duke's speech revealed other motives, which made his regret for this summary execution more likely to sink deep. Seizing on this symptom, Vilain said in a tone of supplication and doubt,

"Does then, indeed, your highness lament the fate of this young man? Would you that he still lived?"

"Would I? Ay, by my halidame, at the price of a province! I have too much blood on my hand already, Vilain; and had Borselen lived to marry Jacqueline, as he no doubt would have done but for my angry mandate and your sanguinary zeal, three earldoms had been mine. Would I that he still lived? Ah, John, John, what have I gained by his death?"

"Gained naught, nor yet lost by it, my gracious master?" cried Vilain, dropping on his knee; "Van Borselen lives—I have overheld his sentence—if disobedience merits death, take my head—I am ready for the block."

"He lives, he lives! ha, ha! ha! ha!" exclaimed Philip, laughing hysterically, "he does? You are sure, John? you said just now he was dead—which must I believe?"

"Noble duke, he lives as surely as I kneel before you," replied Vilain, looking up in the smiling face of the duke, who held him by both shoulders, and joyously shook him.

"My worthy John, I am sorry I once knighted thee, that I cannot dub thee now; but here take this in token of my love; this is the third time thou hast given me my life!"

While he spoke he flung a richly gemmed baldric, and the sword it carried, over Vilain's head; but before he let it quite rest on his shoulder, he added, in a doubtful tone—

"You hold him safe? He is secure?"

"In one of the deepest and dampest dungeons, so it please your highness."

"Then it does not please my highness, good John. Deep and damp! No, no, John—we must keep him high and dry. We must not risk ague or rheumatism to so precious a deposit for Jacqueline's ruin! Go, go, Vilain, ride fast and stop not on your road. Bring him up to your own apartments—feed him well—treat him nobly—he is a valiant knight, Vilain, and of a thick-blooded race that re-

quires comfort and good cheer. The *damp*st dungeon! John, John, it gives me a cold fit but to think of it! Away, away! I shall soon follow thee, with a sufficient force to guard the castle from surprise."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE Governor of Russelmonde hastened back to the fortress, from better feelings than mere anxiety to save his prisoner from an ague. He longed to snatch him from the terrible suspense in which he lingered, and to have the satisfaction of assuring him of his life's safety. He hurried therefore to Van Borselen's dungeon, which was truly what he had described it to Philip; both the captive and the jailer having agreed that the utmost secrecy was necessary as to his existence until the doubtful experiment on Philip's feelings was well gone through, the failure of which would assuredly have caused Vrank's prompt and silent execution on John Vilain's return from Ghent.

"Well, governor, well?" exclaimed Vrank, as Vilain entered the cell, and flung himself half breathless on the miserable bed which for two days had been the prisoner's resting-place.

"What am I to expect or prepare for?" continued he, receiving, instead of an answer, only a conclusive squeeze of one of his hands in the governor's vice-like grasp.

"It is then all over!" said Vrank. "Oh, why did I not die at once? Why linger through these two days of desperate hope?"

"Wait a bit, wait a bit," said Vilain; "Count, give me that pitcher—by Heaven, there is something sticking to my throat.—I am choking!"

Van Borselen, alarmed at the broken and gurgling voice which confirmed this announcement, handed the pitcher to the governor. The latter gulped down a large draught of the water it contained, and then said—

"Ay, I am better now—I can speak without blubbing. And now let me ask you, count, do you think if I had bad news to tell that I would keep you lingering? No,

by St. Andrew! I would have come in with James Brockman by my side, and he should have struck off your head without a moment's notice. No, count, I am not the man to do you or any other gallant knight an unkind or indelicate turn. Your life is safe—the duke has granted it—but I fear it is coupled with a devilish hard condition for any independent man—I much doubt but he will insist on your marrying?”

“Your life is safe,” were words of such sweet sound, that Van Borselen must be pardoned if all that preceded or followed them were forgotten or unheard. Yet he did not betray any unseemly rapture, for a true knight of chivalry would have been as much disgraced by showing joy at escape from death, as at fear for condemnation to it. Vrank therefore heard the good news with a decent delight; and only smiled when John Vilain explained to him, in profound secrecy, that he was certain Duke Philip was bent on forcing him to marry Countess Jacqueline. The removal from the cell below to the chamber above was quickly effected; and the qualifying condition of pardon, so pathetically deplored by John Vilain, was not likely to cause any very great drawback to Vrank Van Borselen's satisfaction.

But few hours had elapsed after this pleasant change in the situation of the latter, when a circumstance, not quite unlooked-for by him, altered the tenor of his treatment once more; and while holding out a prospect of relief, was in reality plunging him in greater peril than before. This was the appearance of several hostile vessels, filled with soldiers, on the river, and bearing up towards the castle, while a body of armed troops were seen approaching it on the landward side.

John Vilain was too good a soldier to be taken quite by surprise. He had been, previously to Vrank's detention, led to expect some outburst of revolt in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, but he did not calculate on their affecting him. But he now saw very clearly from his ramparts that the banner of Burgundy was not flying on the approaching vessels, while the old flag of Holland waved from the masts' head, as well as one with the new colours, so romantically and gallantly adopted by Van Monfoort for Jacqueline's peculiar distinction. No sooner was the governor satisfied that an attack on his fortress was intended by the incoming squadron, and that the

release of Van Borselen could be alone its object, that his decision was taken: namely, to defend himself to the last, to blow himself, his garrison, and castle into the air when resistance became hopeless; but long ere matters came to that extremity, to chop off the head of his prisoner, and so obviate any possible chance of his escape, or reproach to himself.

This decision he communicated to Van Borselen, in conformity with his peculiar notions of candour and delicacy; and the first proofs of his sincerity consisted in loading him with chains, and removing him again to his dungeon, where he waited with such feelings of agitation as may be imagined, during the interval occupied in the fast following transactions.

To John Vilain's great comfort, the troops which approached him by land turned out to be a reinforcement of some hundred men headed by the Duke of Burgundy himself. They entered the castle, unseen from the ships, which were bearing up the river, and were so distributed as to be ready for immediate display to those who might mean to assail the place, and convince them that they were deceived in reckoning on a faint resistance from an insufficient garrison. Almost at the same instant that Philip reached the gates, a small escort approached from another direction, conducting a prisoner, who of all those against whom his crafty efforts were directed, was, next to Van Borselen, the man he most wished to get into his power. It was no other than Rudolf Van Diepenholt, the Bishop of Utrecht, who had incautiously suffered himself to be entrapped by some of Philip's emissaries, and now arrived at Russelmonde, to make one item in that total of miraculous success which seemed in this, as in all other matters, to crown Philip's plans.

A short interview between the bishop and the duke sufficed to inform the former that much, but by no means all of his proceedings, in conjunction with Jacqueline and Borselen, were discovered. He was not a man of many words, where words are of little avail; and neither risked committing nor degrading himself unnecessarily. He therefore submitted to Philip's reproaches without reply, and to his threats without remonstrance, and calmly waited the issue of his fate. But he was not treated with any very heavy indignity by the duke, who had other designs

than the needless humiliation of his victims. He would, in fact, have instantly ordered Van Borselen's chains to be struck off, had he not had an object in view for almost immediate effect, requiring the appearance of these shackles to complete a somewhat melodramatic, but strictly historical combination.

Philip calculated correctly that Jacqueline herself was on board of the vessels which now came so gallantly on with a full tide, in all the pride of hazardous and inspiring enterprise. She had not lost one moment, after Van Borselen's departure from Zeylen, in getting together with all haste such a body of troops as she and her faithful counsellor, Van Monfoort, considered amply sufficient to surprise the isolated castles, to which her forebodings told her Van Borselen was inveigled only for the disgrace and danger of imprisonment, or perhaps for death itself. Two or three hundred picked men, with some pieces of ordnance, were secretly collected by Van Monfoort and De Brederode, and put on board three trading vessels, which lay ready for the use of the confederates close to one of the islands of the Scheldt; and they safely passed Antwerp without detection, and sailed up the river till they came to its confluence with the Nerth, nearly opposite to which stood Russelmonde. They were no sooner there than the canons were mounted on the decks; and the bustle incident to this proceeding betraying their hostile views, the colours of Holland and of Jacqueline's cause were boldly hoisted, the soldiers prepared for a prompt landing and immediate assault, and every appearance of vigour assumed, which was likely to strike terror into a feeble and ill-garrisoned place, such as they had certain information that Russelmonde was.

While the two largest of the vessels, under the command of De Brederode, took up a position in front of the castle, laying their broadsides close, to bear upon it with the whole force of the artillery, Jacqueline caused the other to approach the shore; and disembarking, with Van Monfoort and forty cavaliers, she mounted her horse, the beautiful animal received so lately from her mother, and placing herself at the head of the troop, rode briskly up to the raised drawbridge, that joined the castle-gate, for the purpose of summoning the place to surrender.

Had the Duke of Burgundy been desirous of Jacqueline's

total destruction, he might with great ease have sallied forth and accomplished such a catastrophe; but he most probably shrunk before the odium of so terrible a measure, joining the power of tyranny with the craft of tactics. Instead therefore of repulsing the threatened attack, he chose to parley; and, to Jacqueline's infinite astonishment, he answered her trumpeter's summons by himself appearing on the walls, while at the same instant some hundreds of warriors darted up their helmed heads and brandished spears, swords, and portable missiles of all arms above the battlements.

Jacqueline's heart sunk with terror—not for herself, but from the force of the passion which had previously inspired her energies, and now made them wither under the blighting touch of despair. Had Van Borselen not been the sole object of her thoughts, Philip and his armed soldiers had only excited her indignant courage. But thinking of him alone, she passed over all the gradations of surprise and confusion, which Philip's apparition must so naturally have excited, and she came at once to the point of absorbing interest which it involved. In a voice scarcely articulate, and barely audible in the small open gallery, which hung above the gate for the purposes of parley, she exclaimed,

“Oh, Philip, is he safe? Tell me, in mercy, by your earthly triumphs, and your hopes of Heaven, tell me, does Van Borselen yet live?”

“God's patience! is it *you*, fair cousin, that gives us this greeting?” replied Philip, in a loud voice and ironical tone, which excited considerable merriment among the officers by his side, and roused Van Monfoort and the rest of Jacqueline's escort to the height of fury. “You, that come so far to do honour to our presence in this poor place of Russelmonde? Why how is this? Does the grand master of the forest come to give an account of his trust to the Ruward, in right of his liege lady, the Countess of Holland? So nobly tended too! Some half hundred harnessed cavaliers, and three battle-ships, well filled with fighting men, instead of the common train of a dozen dingy foresters, in russet doublets, and carrying clumsy poleaxes!”

“Oh, Philip! for the sake of the Virgin, and thy holy patron, St. Andrew, answer me—I sink, I faint from dread! Does he live?”

"What then! Is this after all a visit not of courtesy to us, but of inquiry after the noble stadtholder, the valiant Count Ostervent, the Kabblejaw chief? By my patron, whom you invoke, fair cousin, who may have inspired you with this charity for your old enemy—and the Virgin, who, I much fear me, has not served for your model in chastity, I swear that this moves my wonder!"

"Devils of hell! Why have I not a bow or arquebuss to send a shaft or shot against the insolent tyrant!" exclaimed Van Monfoort, as he placed one arm round Jacqueline's waist, seeing that she was drooping, and almost sinking in her seat, while with the other outstretched, he shook all the anger of a clenched fist in the direction of Philip's position. This imprudence roused Jacqueline to a sense of the danger of exciting the duke's rage, and revived her more than the best-directed efforts of prudence or reasoning could have done.

"Philip!" she cried once more, but in tones expressing desperation rather than exhaustion, "this torture is terrible—I can endure no more. Answer me, does he live? Answer quick and clear, or by Heaven's host I plunge headlong into this deep fosse—and my blood be on thy head!"

She rose up in her seat as she spoke, and holding her reins high in both hands, the noble animal, who had learned to obey her slightest touch, raised his forelegs, and was on the point of bounding across the low parapet that skirted the ditch. Van Monfoort was thrown on one side and nearly unhorsed by the prompt movement of Jacqueline's palfry—the others of the escort were several paces behind; nothing intervened between her and the fatal plunge, which would have dashed her to pieces on the rocky bottom of the fosse, when Philip, shocked at the horrid catastrophe so threatened, and which Jacqueline's wild air and tone convinced him was certain to follow a protraction of his cruel mockery, almost threw himself over the balustrade of the little gallery, in his outstretching impatience to stop the desperate result.

"Hold, Jacqueline, hold!" cried he—"He is safe—he lives—hold but one moment, and you shall see him safe and well."

Jacqueline instinctively pulled in her palfry, who reared and plunged, in brute impatience at restraint, even though

saved by it from destruction. At the same moment Van Borselen was led out by the small door opening from the castle into the gallery; and as he stood, loaded with chains, and gazing down in astonished rapture, that made him forget the presence of this tyrant master, his own peril, and all but her on whom his looks were riveted, she uttered one of those short wild shrieks of joy, which such scenes, and such only call forth; and viewing at the instant the drawbridge let down, and the castle gate fly open, she threw herself forward on her palfry's neck, urged him to utmost speed—and he flew rather than galloped across, and disappeared in the gloom of the arched entrance. Before any one of the observers could take breath after this astounding event, the drawbridge began slowly to rise again, and the ponderous gates to close, moved by unseen persons, who worked the chains and pulleys from within. The sound of the palfry's feet was heard in hollow rattling on the pavement inside. Van Monfoort recovered electrically from his stupified amaze; and darting his spurs into the side of his steed, Van Borselen's noble gift, he just cleared the drawbridge, and entered the gate, as the one opened upwards, and rose above the chasm it guarded, and the other closed on its creaking hinges, and was fastened by huge self-shooting bolts.

A loud shout of triumph, and a laugh of mockery burst from the battlements. The troop which had formed Jacqueline's escort stood for a moment bewildered at the scene—they then, as if by common consent, though not a word of command was given, wheeled away, and made with all speed to the river side, where, as fast as could be, they re-embarked, turning their horses loose in the low pastures, and carrying the strange news, and their own panic on board the little squadron. Within half an hour afterward, in accordance to a convention between De Brederode and the duke, the former struck both his flags, unarmed his guns, and moored his vessels in peace, if not in friendship, close under the walls of the castle.

It may well be supposed that this eventful half-hour was busily and conclusively employed inside.

The wild joy of Jacqueline and Van Borselen as they stood clasped in each other's arms—the triumph of Philip at the success of the stratagem on which he calculated so

well for entrapping our heroine—the fury of Van Monfoort—the grave regret of Diepenholt, must all be trusted to the reader's own conception. The consequence of all is quickly told. Philip having now got at once into his power the four individuals most feared by him on earth, and who alone possessed any serious means of opposing his cherished designs of aggrandizement, was enabled to make with each whatever terms he pleased. The first object was to obtain Jacqueline's unconditional abdication of all her rights to Holland, Zealand, and Friesland, as the price of Van Borselen's life. No sooner was the proposition made than she signed a short but explicit act, which was ready drawn up for the occasion by one of Philip's secretaries, even while Jacqueline had held parley in front of the castle. This being duly executed, and signed by her seal of state, which was procured from on board the vessel that bore her on her expedition, it might have been expected—and it was perhaps hoped by some of the parties—that generosity would have paid its tardy visit to Philip's breast, and that he would recompense Jacqueline's sacrifices and sufferings, by proposing a marriage between her and the man she so avowedly loved and lived for. Not so. Whatever Philip might have been inclined to do before they fell into his power, for the purposes of selfish ambition, he was now resolved to give no chance for the existence of some future claimant to the dominions secured after such labour and such iniquity for himself and the heirs he looked for. He therefore resolved that both Jacqueline and Borselen should remain his prisoners for ever in all the anguish of separation, and the blight of singleness. Flanders was the place he destined for their final imprisonment; but before he removed them to that most secure ground of all his possessions, he felt it necessary to have Jacqueline's renunciation of her claims loudly and beyond cavil proclaimed by herself, in the country most materially affected. It was for this purpose that Philip resolved to remove, in the first instance, with his four prisoners, to Dordrecht in Holland, where Zweder Van Culembourg had (under his protection) installed himself, and removed the nominal authority of the see of Utrecht, which he still persevered in calling

his, notwithstanding his ignominious defeat by Van Diepenholt, the chapter, and the citizens.

The surrender of Van Diepenholt's pretensions was also a point of material interest to Philip; as it would relieve him from the constant dread of Jacqueline's most powerful friend, and secure the restoration of his own devoted creature, which, to a sovereign of Philip's stamp, was equivalent to a staunch adherent. The double abdication of Jacqueline and Rudolf being thus resolved on, with perpetual confinement in some strong fortress to each of his captives,—for Van Monfoort also was no mean prey nor an enemy to let loose again—the duke determined to set out the next day on his triumphal march for Dordrecht; and he gave such orders as ensured for it every possible demonstration of his own power and the utter humiliation of his prisoners.

We shall pass over a description of this march. It was all that the last written sentence promised. Every disposable cavalry soldier within the fortress or the surrounding cantonments swelled the convoy, which was enriched with all the parade of music and banners; and when it reached Antwerp at eve the whole population poured out to gaze on the captives, and make the air ring with shouts of praise in honour of their mighty and magnanimous sovereign.

Another day of easy journeying brought the cortége—now increased to the appearance of a little army—to a second halting-place, a few leagues from Dordrecht; and all was again arranged for the resumption of the march at sunrise the following morning, in order that the public entry into the last-named town should be made early in the day, to give ample room for the ceremonies intended in honour of the occasion.

The events of that momentous day must be recorded in another—and concluding—chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

NEVER was morning ushered in by a night more ominously dismal, or a dawn more fearful, than that which now broke over the whole district through which lay the line of march. Darkness had scarcely thrown its pall on the expiring beauties of the preceding day, when a low moaning was heard to sweep across the plains that stretched westward towards the sea. The dashing of the waves against the defences which centuries had scarcely sufficed to form, sounded like ocean's voice, angrily claiming from man the spoils he had after so long a struggle rescued from its dominion. Those who had listened to the rushing tide might well have shuddered while picturing the early days when the waters rolled for leagues upon the shore, and all that now smiled in culture and wealth was a waste of swamp and marsh, whose savage occupiers were taught by instinct to raise those mounds and dikes, perfected by civilization, into barriers against the whelming element. And all who listened now might remember how often those barriers had proved insufficient, and fearfully reckon up the inundations which had at intervals desolated the country.

The Duke of Burgundy, and those he conducted, journeyed inland, a few leagues from the great volume of ocean; but several branches of the sea ran up in narrow currents through the dead flat of this district; and the cortége was at times forced to make a sweep round the heads of these salt-lakes, to the eastward of the dikes that kept out their encroachments, or to ride across the strand where the passage was safe and easily effected. Such was more particularly the nature of the country, on this last day's march close up to Dordrecht; but all the intervals between these occasional interruptions were covered by numerous villages and highly cultivated pastures. It was, in fact, the wealthiest and most populous district of Holland, a notion of which may be imagined by the traveller who sees the *Pays de Waes*, in Flanders, at this day.

The sound of wailing, at first sent forward by the west-

ward, at sunset on the evening of the second halt, was soon followed by irregular gusts that spoke the rising wrath of the storm. Flights of wild-fowl, and sea-birds that rarely sought the shore, were faintly seen in the twilight, or heard in the fast-coming gloom, sweeping with outstretched wings before the blast—their shrill screams mixing at times with its whistling voice, or varying its hoarse and hollow tones.

Hour after hour the tempest grew louder and stronger. The sea rose with the increasing wind, and the natural roar of the billows made fierce harmony with the awful echoing of their splash against the dikes. No mortal closed an eye in sleep that night throughout the populous tract we describe, save the worn victims of disease, and even they must have touched close on the extinction of life who were not roused by terror at the elemental war.

At daybreak the storm was at its height. The desolate look of earth was in keeping with the dull gray of the sky, and the muddy foam which rose on the turbid waters. Fear seemed to have seized on every living thing. The people were all abroad. Some were seen exerting their utmost energy in repairing and strengthening the dikes wherever the slightest symptom of failure was perceived. Others drove the cattle into shelter, while the plaintive lowing of cows and the timid bleat of sheep spoke the subduing influence of the general alarm. The sun at length rose, not in dazzling brightness, or through an atmosphere of many-coloured tints, all tinged with golden radiance—but with red, dull, and bloated disk, like some drunken reveller slowly rising through the fumes of a debauch.

The stern heart of Philip of Burgundy did not quail at these symptoms of evil omen, which might have persuaded a more superstitious man that Heaven was wrathful at his iniquitous projects. As the wind blew, and his frightened horse recoiled from the blast, he only wrapped his cloak the closer, struck his spurs deep, and reiterated his commands for the march. The advanced guard was already forward; and the duke, with his prisoners, close followed by the main body, was soon moving on in the regular order of the preceding days.

Progress was, however, extremely slow, and with great difficulty feasible at all. Gusts of wind at times stopped,

not only the advanced pickets, but compact squadrons; men were unhorsed; steeds and riders suddenly whirled round, or overthrown together; and the blocked-up passage of the narrow road more than once threw the whole into confusion. Then came the angry efforts of ill-tempered men, and the resistance of restive beasts; the loud vociferations of the chiefs; the curses of the soldiers; neighings, snortings, tramping on the paved road, splashing in the water that in places overflowed it; but all at intervals outvoiced and hushed by the terrific roar of the west wind, which bellowed like a troop of forest-monsters above the shrieks of their flying prey.

Philip, impatient at the obstacles which crowded the road and stopped the march, had pushed on to the front to set an example of perseverance, and disembarass himself from the throng among whom he was crushed and hustled. The prisoners kept close to him, by his invitation. Jacqueline and Van Borselen were side by side behind the duke. Van Diepenholt and Ludwick came next, and some stragglers of the advanced guard followed without any order of precedence. Above an hour was thus consumed, and not a league yet traversed, when they arrived at a pass, formed by some wooded sandbanks on the one side, and on the other by a tolerably high dike, or mound of earth, over which the spray of the waves dashed into the road, while its loosened and broken construction was visibly shaken, and threatened with utter overthrow by each successive sea-stroke which lashed it outside.

Standing close at the base of the mound, at times shrouded by the spray, and even during the respites from its attacks dripping from head to feet, were four men, between the ages of twenty and thirty, each armed with the peculiar spade or shovel used for dike-digging labour, and all in a costume totally different from that of the inhabitants of the district where they were now found. The reader who remembers the dress described as worn by Vrank Van Borselen's companion in the Zevenvolden may correctly picture that of the four strangers; and Duke Philip, with those around him, who had seen and closely remarked the countenance of that personage, thought they could trace in the half-savage and drenched features of the men now before them a strong likeness to it—a resem-

blance, however, of the species, rather than the individual, such as the lion's cubs might bear to their sire. Vrank Van Borselen knew the men well; and an innate conviction, founded on this knowledge, told him they were there to do him service. He was satisfied they had not for nothing found their way from Eversdike, where he had certain intelligence they had been four days previously; and the place of this unexpected meeting, the air of resolution which frowned in the four faces, and, more than all, the non-appearance of *him*, who, something irresistibly whispered Vrank, was yet not far off, convinced him that some deep-laid scheme, some desperate effort for his rescue was now on the point of execution.

With this conviction he turned to Jacqueline, who had all along contrived to keep her beautiful and spirited palfrey close by the side of his, and he said to her, his face glowing the while with courageous hope,

"My own beloved one, my matchless Jacqueline, all is well; there is freedom and safety at hand."

"Count Ostervent, what mean those words?" asked Philip, sternly, and suddenly wheeling round his horse, as though the impulse which prompted his question was not altogether unaided by a disinclination to press too much forward into the strange company so close before him.

"Their meaning, duke, must be found in their fulfilment—Heaven works for the innocent—our deliverance is at hand!" answered Van Borselen, closely pressing Jacqueline's waist within his arm.

"Who are yonder men? free Frisons, methinks?" said Philip, still urging his horse, as if to pass back to the straggling soldiers of the advanced guard.

"The sons of Oost, the dike-digger," replied Vrank, still in a respectful tone, but without making way for the retreating duke.

"And where is their fierce father?" said Philip, looking round with an anxious stare.

"*Here* he is, Philip!" cried Oost, in his loudest and harshest key, and in the low German jargon, the only language he spoke (though he had picked up a smattering of others), springing at the same time from the shrubs which skirted the wood and came close to the road.

"Ah! treason! treachery!" exclaimed Philip, at the

apparition of this terrible figure; and with these words he dashed forward, endeavouring to burst through the impediments to his flight. But while Oost seized his bridle with a powerful grasp, and held his horse fast with as much ease as a common man might master the struggles of a child, Van Monfoort and Van Diepenholt, promptly seeing the state of things, closed upon the unhappy duke, who thus saw himself completely caught in his own net, and threatened with destruction by the instruments he had wrought with, as if for his own ruin.

What followed was acted with more rapidity than may be traced by pen, told by tongue, or imagined by thought. Sculpture or painting can alone embody the vivid variety of such events, and show forth at once a group of incidents and passions, forming a living combination of all that may interest or agitate the mind.

"Away, away! There, there! The wide world is now your own;" hallooed Oost, in the peculiar idiom of Friesland, which Van Borselen alone understood, and stretching forth one muscular arm towards the sea.

"Away, Jacqueline—away, my beloved!" echoed Vrank, heading his horse in the direction pointed out by Oost's rapid gesture. She needed no more than his example or his command to rush with him into the open arms of death; and little less seemed their joint movement now, to the astonished eyes of Philip, Laudwick, and Rudolf, as they breasted the sloping dike, and appeared to court the watery grave beyond.

"Now, now, my sons!" cried Oost to the four men—and simultaneously with his signal they each struck their weapons deep into the already loosened summit of the dike, and with every stroke a gash was made, through which the water hissed and oozed in frightful rapidity.

"Well done, bold dike-diggers!" said he again, and at each renewed stroke which let in destruction upon both him and them he cried—but never loosening hold of Philip and his horse's rein—"Well done, Tabbo! Bravely struck, Ubbo! Ha, ha, for Igo of the strong arm! Good, good, young Gosso, my last-born boy! Free Frisons all, for life and death!"

While Philip struggled for escape as if in the last agony, and his frightened followers all fell back in total derout,

not one coming to his aid, Van Borselen and Jacqueline had gained the top of the mound, which crumbled under their horses' hoofs, and they were a moment visible, struggling to urge the animals down the opposite side; but every effort was repelled by the fierce storm-gusts which continually forced them back, and threatened to blow them prostrate on the road. The waves now rushed freely in, and the fierce workmen, self-sacrificed, and in their dreadful task, were mid-deep in the water, mud, and sand which poured down the dike.

Van Monfoort, seeing Jacqueline's perilous situation, thought only of her, but had neither means of succour nor a notion how to aid her. Van Diepenholt, with a clearer head and a mind less absorbed by others' danger, resolved on an effort to escape from his own. He felt that Van Borselen must have had Oost's authority for the seeming madness of his course. He therefore pressed forward for the place where he and Jacqueline still struggled—Van Monfoort followed instinctively—they forced their horses to scramble up the mound—and just as they reached the top, Van Borselen and Jacqueline having a moment before disappeared beyond, the whole mass came down, swept inwards by the booming sea, which rushed after in one wide, earth-swallowing deluge.

Billow after billow poured surging on, chasing each other with loud roar, like barbarian hordes shouting over the conquest of some fair and fertile land. In less time than fancy can suppose possible for such destruction, a whole district was overflowed. No hill existed to oppose—no rock to mark the depth, or measure the speed of the inundation—but the thirsty soil drank the waves, till, replete and saturated, it flung them up again, thickened, discoloured, and loathsome. Men and cattle were drowned; houses dashed down; trees uprooted; their roots wrenched from their grasp in the deep soil, and huge masses of earth scooped out by the sharp waves, and whirled up to the surface of the seething flood. The horrible rapidity of such a catastrophe in such a country left no time for flight, no place for refuge. Fate struck quick and strong. Within an hour an extent of many square miles was under water, seventy-two villages were submerged, and full one hundred thousand human beings had perished. A new

sea was formed—a whole district blotted from the world's face ; and many a voyager now steers his course through the broad waves of the *Bisbosch*, without even knowing that he sails over a space once fertile and flourishing, a second Atlantis—or casting a glance into the waves, or a thought into time, for the monuments covered by the one, or the thousand associations of history and romance deep buried in the other.

In the very earliest burst of the deluge through the torn-down dike, Oost and his four sons were suffocated by the mingled ruins. Self-immolated in the cause to which he had vowed his existence and sworn to sacrifice his life, the noble savage and his congenial children quitted the world without a pang, save those of the physical agony, which they despised. Deep in the plot which was to have burst out so soon, and in which he embarked with his usual ferocious fidelity, Oost heard soon, like *Vrouwe Bona* and the rest of the confederates, of *Van Borselen's* detention in *Russelmonde*. To rescue the Lord of *Eversdike*, or perish in the attempt, was his firm resolve. His sons had no thought beyond his will. Patriarchal and feudal authority were combined in the person of every Frison father ; and to bid his children follow his footsteps and to share his fate was to have it done. Oost's quickness and sagacity were not surpassed by any wood-rousing Indian, who traverses whole wastes of forests to relieve a friend, or kill a foe. He scarcely entered on the confines of Holland, when he learned of Philip's triumphal march towards *Dordrecht* ; and he was not long in fixing on the place in which, with the assistance of his sons, he saw a fair chance of effecting the rescue of *Vrank* and *Jacqueline*, and the destruction of Philip and such of his host for whose safety Heaven might not interpose a miracle—but neither calculating nor caring for the immensity of ruin which followed. Such was not interposed. Of all the brilliant train that followed their sovereign's steps on that wild march not one was left to tell the tale.

But Philip's good fortune saved him from the general fate, and procured him a protector in one whom he expected to find a relentless witness of his destruction.

The unerring sagacity of Oost had made him remark and single out a sand-formed elevation, the only one near the head of that arm of sea, which was dammed out by the

dike he subsequently destroyed. It lay a few score yards northward of the mound, and was sufficiently large and firm to act as a breakwater for its preservation, turning off the surge furiously to windward, and forming a shallow and comparatively smooth channel between it and the shore.

It needs not to be told that it was to this haven of safety that poor Oost pointed in that last exertion of devoted service that showed Vrank the way to freedom. And there did he and Jacqueline safely stand, just joined in time by Van Monfoort and Van Diepenholt, and all looked awe-struck back on the sublime desolation from which they had miraculously escaped.

As they gazed and marked the billows, frightfully populous with hideous forms of death, one living being caught their eye, clinging with convulsive grasp to the branch of an old oak, the only tree that had withstood the shock, and even that was bent and bowed down to the water, and every instant threatening to sink, like its fellows of the forest. In the drenched and agonized man who thus grappled with fate, and buffeted the waves that washed over and threatened to choke him, the group of Providence's chosen ones recognised the person of the magnificent, the mighty Duke of Burgundy.

Vrank Van Borselen knew no impulse then but generous humanity. Wrongs past or intended were expunged from his memory, while the long account of princely kindnesses and late honours received from Philip rose swelling in his mind, more buoyant and more palpable from the warm gushing pity which now seemed to overflow his breast.

"What!" cried he, as if a moment's internal struggle had held him back, "shall I be outdone by those half-civilized men, who have lost themselves to save such a one as I am? Shall I let the pride of chivalry and Europe's masterpiece perish like a drowned dog?"

He waited no answer to these questions, even from himself, to whom they were put; but driving his horse headlong into the flood, and holding him well up, he was quickly borne close to the spot on the watery waste where Philip clung, almost senseless from exhaustion and fright. Vrank stayed his own course by seizing another branch, and shouted

to Philip to loose his hold, and drop behind him on the horse's croup. A wild stare was Philip's only notice of the summons. The flood was rushing on, and had just swept round the animal into a less favourable direction, when the duke, recovering a full sense of the only chance for escape, sprang actively away, gained the safe seat, and grasped Vrank's waist with one hand, still holding in the other a portion of the branch which had so long kept him up, with that tenacious clutch of giant-nerved despair. The eddying current favoured Vrank's return. He urged on his horse by hand and heel. The animal's instinct forced it to utmost exertion. Philip was not idle in efforts to increase the speed with which it swam—and a few minutes brought it and its double cargo of mortality to the safety-mound.

There Jacqueline sat on her trembling palfrey, benumbed with wet and cold, pale, shivering, and awe-stricken—yet offering up warm thanksgiving for the safety of the hero to whom her heart and soul were pledged.

Philip instantly flung himself from the horse, sank on his knees, and fell prostrate, in the deep sincerity of pious acknowledgments to Heaven. A low-murmured prayer first passed his lips, fresh glowing from his heart. He next bethought him of the man who had saved him; and his varied emotions of admiration, remorse, and gratitude for a while kept him dumb.

A movement of princely munificence promptly spoke to the identity of Philip's character, and stamped it as unaltered, though at once subdued and elevated, by this awful trial.

"Here, Count Ostervent," cried he, at the same time taking the splendid collar and medal of the Golden Fleece from his neck and placing it on Vrank's,—“here is the proudest distinction my gratitude may bestow. I make thee one of the noblest order which Christendom may boast—Thou art now in brotherhood and fellowship with kings! I name thee, too, lord of East and West Vorne, of Mastersdike and Brille—I confirm thee stadtholder and governor of Holland, Zeeland, and Friesland—I endow thee with—”

“Hold, hold, my sovereign!” said Vrank, “shame not an act of sheer humanity, by loading it with praise and payment due but to deeds of most heroic stamp.”

"And is not this heroism? Is not the forgiveness of evil done, the snatching from perdition of a deadly foe, a deed for sovereigns to reward, and Heaven to bless? Thus, then, I make my poor atonement to thee and her whose heart enshrines thee in its core. Yes, Jacqueline, this hour of awe and dread shall witness my repentance. Thou shalt be his—he thine—both evermore each other's! I give not mere consent—but I command, implore ye, for my happiness as for your own bliss, to be this day but one—joined in eternal bonds of marriage as of love. Look yonder at that fleet sweeping towards us with swelling sails, to rescue what is left of this sad pageant of destruction. It will soon bear us hence to shore. Let your first act of gratitude to Heaven be the union of two thankful hearts, a sacrifice more worthy than burnt-offerings! Be married this very day!"

Philip was amazed to see a faint smile, which even the awful spectacle around could not quite repress, quiver on Jacqueline's and Van Borselen's pallid lips, like a quick glancing sunbeam on a frozen stream. They clasped each other in a close embrace, but spoke not. Van Diepenholt, exchanging a significant glance with them and Van Monfoort, said, in solemn accents—

"Duke Philip, thy consent, command, or entreaty, each and all come too late. Heaven has already effected what thou wouldst have opposed, but might not prevent. A month gone I joined this couple in holy wedlock at the chapel-altar of Teylingen, bright love her dowry and proud honour his inheritance, with Van Monfoort here for witness of the rite. What Heaven has joined man may not, durst not separate!"

"Yet these impious hands, this irreverent tongue were moved to do that deed!" exclaimed Philip, with a tone of bitter remorse. "Thank Heaven, I was spared an act of gloom and guilt! and now for retribution! Jacqueline, from this hour I reinstate thee in thy rights, full and unshackled mistress of all that was ever thine, and which I ought never to have looked upon with ambition's narrow glance, Countess of Holland, Zealand, Hainault—"

"No, Philip, no!" said Jacqueline in fervent and impassioned accents—"never shall those vain titles be mine again—never shall aught but the sway over one noble heart be

my sovereignty! Here, in this harrowing yet hallowed scene, I renounce the pomp of worldly greatness. Devoted to privacy and bliss, my days shall now run free from the agonizing pangs of power. I vow myself to love, retirement, and calm virtue—an humble but pure offering to the omnipotent Being who has saved us all!”

The records of history prove that the vow so solemnly made was devoutly kept.

The fleet of fisher-boats, carracks, and ships of war now came on, from every quarter where the inundation was visible. The immense expanse covered by the sea sufficed to calm its fury; and it floated in deep, calm, and still repletion over the tract it had ingulphed, as a glutted tiger might lie down reposing on the mangled body of its prey.

Few, very few, except the one group that interests us most, were snatched from death. *They* were carried safely off in one of the boats. And even in that hour, with a heart swelling with joy for her own deliverance, and horror at the wide-sweeping destruction, Jacqueline could not repress a sigh, and barely restrained a tear, for the beautiful horse who had swam with her to safety, but which was, of stern necessity, left to perish with its fellows in the fast-flowing flood that soon swept them from the mound.

The public marriage of Jacqueline and Vrank Van Borselen took place in the old halls of Eversdike. Is the fancy of a romancer required to picture the acclamations that broke from its delighted groups—the calm and regulated pleasure of the old; the wild rapture of the young, who shared in the general joy? And can the most uncurbed imagination that ever pierced the mysteries of the human mind tell what and how *they* felt, the pair who sat down at length in the calm sunset of wedded bliss, and in the leafy shade of private life?

Need we tell how smooth, how brilliant, how quick the years passed by? Or shall we stop the soft murmur of the stream, to dive in its placid current, seek whirlpools and rocks beneath, or tell how at length it was arrested in its course, and dashed over the brink of the dark grave?

No; we have traced what they suffered in their perilous trials. Let the knowledge of what they afterward enjoyed be gathered from the fact, that from the moment of their second marriage their names are lost to history. What

better proof could be that their days were unbroken in upon by the world's turmoil, and their nights devoted to its forgetfulness!—the one, the only real luxury of life!

Jacqueline passed the rest of her happy existence alternately at Zuylen, Eversdike, and Teylingen. In the last of those castles she died. And we do not envy him who can gaze on its ruins to-day, or pace the grass-covered courts, without his mind being carried back to her whose happiest and whose latest hours were passed within those time-worn walls, which read such deep and varied lessons to all who can feel and think.

For the rest we refer to history. Philip's long career of greatness and *goodness*—so called—was the wonder of his times, and is still the admiration of ours.

Glocester and his frail partner went on as might be looked for, till her unholy ambition ruined and lost them both. For their subsequent history, and that of Elinor's vile creatures, Bolingbroke and Jourdain, Shakspeare's ever-living page must speak.

St. Pol felt the withering influence of all who crossed Philip's path of greatness. He followed his wretched brother to the grave ere he was well seated in his sovereign chair; and was, as well as Jacqueline, succeeded by the Duke of Burgundy as his uncontested heir. Bedford was soon removed from life, full of fame—but blotted by one ineffaceable stain.

De Richemont lived long enough to make a glorious name, founded on inveterate hatred and great success against the English arms, and a large share in the deliverance of his country from the invader's grasp.

Van Diepenholt was soon confirmed in his bishopric of Utrecht—and Zweder Van Culembourgh died in obscurity, as he had lived in disgrace.

Vrouwe Bona Van Borselen reached a good old age, doubly happy in the society of her dear son and the reflection of having revenged her husband. One thing alone seemed at times to darken her joy—the memory of a feeling which lingered to the last in old Floris's mind with respect to Vrank—a never-to-be-forgotten regret, close married to resentment, that he had shown a reluctance so degenerate to plunge in the bliss of civil war, and to imbrue his hands (if *duly* called) in the heart's-blood of his father.

In the year 1769, nearly three centuries and a half from the period of our tale, the vaults of the chapel of the Courts of Holland in the Hague were opened. Coffins and skeletons were found. One body was almost in a perfect state of preservation, enwrapped in costly sear-cloths. It was that of a female. The headdress was garnished with rose-coloured ribands. When the assistants of the ceremony of exhumation raised this body up it crumbled instantly to dust—the squalid skeleton and long thick tresses alone remaining of her who was once the paragon of beauty, greatness of soul, and goodness of heart. The bones were piously reburied. The hair is to this day preserved,* as it once graced her head; and its strong natural curl, and the few straggling lines of gray that silver its light brown wreaths, tell how firm was the mind, how tried the heart of her who lived as we have told, and who died in her prime, too deeply touched by the hand of premature decay.

* The Museum of the Hague.

THE END.

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